

**Investigating the learner-centred  
approach in language teaching in  
Lesotho**

**'Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau**

**Master of Education**

**Victoria University**

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## **Abstract**

In Lesotho the policy regarding language learning and teaching is spelt out in the syllabus. Inspired by the constitution and resulting from broad consultations the policy requires the active involvement of learners through a learner-centred mode of delivery.

This study investigates the use of learner-centred approach in the teaching of English and Sesotho languages in Lesotho secondary schools. The researcher describes the learner-centred approach to teaching as it can be observed in the context of Lesotho; examines skills acquired through the learner-centred approach; inquires into the learning that is experienced in learner-centred classrooms; and considers how the approach can be improved. The findings, based on learners' and teachers' questionnaires, observations and focus group discussions, indicate that certain learner-centred strategies suggested in the syllabus as well as other methods are used; and certain skills and content knowledge are acquired from each learner-centred strategy simultaneously. Past experience is crucial in assisting learners to form and build new knowledge. Moreover, it is apparent that learners and teachers consider working alone (not always considered a learner-centred strategy) to be important in building confidence and independence skills. Suggestions are also forwarded as to how to improve and maximise the teaching of languages using the learner-centred approach.

## **Student Declaration**

“I, **Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau** declare that the Master by Research thesis entitled **Investigating the learner-centred approach in language teaching in Lesotho** is no more than 60,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work”.

**Signature:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

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My supervisors provided academic morale and support to me, while going through the different stages of research. Words fail me for I do not know how and where to start when acknowledging their contribution. This does not apply for where to start only but also there is no indication of where to stop either. In this regard I am not going to stop thanking them. Their support and advice in all respects is well noted and it will be alive for years to come.

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## **List of Acronyms**

COSC: Cambridge Overseas Senior Certificate

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

LCE: Lesotho College of Education

MOET: Ministry of Education and Training

NCDC: National Curriculum Development Centre

NUL: National University of Lesotho

PGCE: Postgraduate Certificate in Education

EFA: Education for All

WHO: World Health Organisation

UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

## Chapter 1: Introduction

This study evaluates the implementation of a learner-centred approach to teaching in Lesotho<sup>1</sup>, It further gives a broad picture of education in Lesotho, as a context for the research area in which it focuses.

### 1.1 The constitution and the provision of education

Under its general educational aims, the constitution of Lesotho proclaims that every Mosotho citizen has a right to be educated. It is in this light that this study discusses education in Lesotho. The constitution declares that education should focus on a range of educational priorities and the first three are of interest in this study. Article 28 pronounces:

*Lesotho shall endeavour to make education available to all and shall adopt policies aimed at securing that:*

*(a) Education is directed to the full development of the human personality and sense of dignity and strengthening the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;*

*(b) Primary education is compulsory and available to all;*

*(c) Secondary education, including technical and vocational education, is made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education.*

The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in Lesotho has a responsibility to ensure that every Mosotho citizen will have access to education as stated in the constitution. In contrast with many other developing countries, female participation in education in Lesotho has been much higher than that of males.

The Lesotho education system is classified in the following levels: 7:3:2, that is, seven years of primary education, and three of junior secondary education.

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<sup>1</sup> Lesotho-- a country in Southern Africa  
Mosotho—a citizen of Lesotho

Sesotho—the first language in Lesotho  
Basotho—many citizens of Lesotho (plural)

Together these are referred to as basic education. Two years of senior secondary education then follow. This study will focus primarily on junior and senior secondary education. In the Curriculum Policy (1980) the then Minister of Education stated that the major aim of education was to, 'assist each individual learner, by proper guidance and leadership, to become a fully and generally well developed person and a useful member of his or her community' (Ministry of Education 1980).

The aims and objectives of education in Lesotho are expressed in different policy documents. These aims emanate from the national dialogues which were undertaken in 1978 when the nation was asked about the type of education they wanted for their children. The responses from these dialogues resulted in a number of policies which were put into operation by MOET. All these documents call for a change in the aims for the education of Basotho learners so that they might cherish their nation. These documents are implementing the constitution.

The Educational Manifesto Ministry of Education (1984, p.60) for instance, lists some of the broad aims of secondary education, as 'the preparation of learners for useful living within society'. The Manifesto goes on to suggest that education should:

*Provide diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and roles possessed by or open to students after their secondary school course*

*Develop and project the Basotho culture, art, and language as well as the world's cultural heritage*

*Raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour and appreciate those values specified under the broad aims and live as good citizens*

*Inspire all students with a desire for achievement and self-improvement both at school and in later life (Ministry of Education 1984)*

Currently, the education policy objectives and activities that cut across all education programmes aim to consolidate and bring about effective coordination of the diverse efforts of various bodies concerned. The aims focus on:

*Opportunities to develop competencies and education programmes, cultural values and activities that enhance individual and social development*

*Sufficient number of individuals equipped with the appropriate occupational, technical and managerial skills to enable them to participate in socio-economic development*  
(<http://www.lesotho.gov.ls>)

More recently in a seminar report on the localisation of senior secondary (O'level) curriculum, the Ministry of Education (1995, p.23) specified that secondary education should aim to:

*Build the foundation required for advanced academic, vocational and professional training*

*Provide students with opportunities to achieve the full development of their talents by providing options for specialisation*

*Develop a sense of consciousness for national priorities and goals, as well as a sense of commitment to national and personal priorities*

*Encourage amongst the learners the spirit of cooperation with, and service to the less privileged members of their communities and to discourage a feeling of superiority*

*Provide moral instruction and develop a socially acceptable culture.*

## **1.2 Languages policies**

Specific policies dealing with language learning emanate from the constitution, which proclaims that Sesotho and English are the official languages in Lesotho. In each level, primary and secondary, both the first language, Sesotho, and the

second language, English, have to be learned and passed.

In order to accomplish language learning, there are specific aims listed by the policy. The aims are classified for primary and for secondary education. Out of the many primary aims, these two are of interest:

*To ensure permanent and functional literacy in Sesotho and English, and basic numeracy as a foundation for further learning and effective living*

*To provide suitable opportunities for a variety of practical and creative activities aimed at personal development and in particular, the growth of positive attitudes to work (Ministry of Education 1992).*

Building on these goals stated in the various policies, the MOET developed a policy on the localisation of O' level education so that curriculum and assessment would be locally developed instead of coming from University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES). The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), which has a key responsibility for developing the national curriculum according to these goals and ensuring the availability of relevant instructional materials to meet the needs of the country, embarked on a curriculum review. This resulted in a new syllabus and recommendations. One of the recommendations was that the approach to teaching in all subjects should be learner-centred rather than teacher-centred. The subjects include the official languages of English and Sesotho (including language and literature) which this study focuses on. After the 1995 seminar, NCDC translated the educational aims into curriculum aims. This was done at a workshop where the stakeholders had to indicate what needs the curriculum was to address. At this time the learner-centred approach was included as part of the design (Ministry of Education 2002, p.21). In the language syllabi (both Sesotho and English) Ministry of Education (2002, p.7) the following aims are addressed. Students are expected to:

*Develop adequate language skills for survival*

*Develop confidence and communicative competence to use language in appropriate situations, to address topical issues of*

*national and international interest*

*Develop skills that will tap into their creativity, imagination and critical thinking skills, and will enable their active involvement in social activities*

*Acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes which will enhance functional and permanent abilities in listening, speaking, reading and writing languages*

*Appreciate their culture and other cultures through reading books, newspapers written in both languages.*

### **1.3 Adopting a learner centred approach**

In adopting the learner-centred approach, the syllabus suggested the use of these learner-centred strategies:

- group work
- games
- songs
- riddles
- pictures
- cultural day celebrations (Sesotho)
- research
- educational field trips
- drama
- simulation
- use of cards and tables
- drawings and stories (Ministry of Education 2002, p.7)

In order to evaluate the impact of the revised syllabus and how it was perceived and implemented, the revised syllabus was trialled in eighteen schools. Five years later in the evaluation report, *Secondary Revised Curriculum In Trial Schools Leading Towards Localised O`Level Curriculum* (Ministry of Education 2002), it was reported that fourteen percent of the teachers from trial schools considered the revised curriculum to be child-centred, practical to classroom conditions and spiral in nature. However, the teachers noted a number of

drawbacks:

- The lack of relevant instructional materials which would support pupil-centred teaching approaches (25%)
- The bulky and very challenging syllabus
- The time teachers needed for lesson preparation
- The need to find appropriate learner-centred teaching strategies.

The evaluation also revealed that even though the teachers were expected to use the revised curriculum, some were resistant to the change.

Within this context, the intention of this study is to investigate the learner-centred strategies which are currently being employed by secondary school language teachers in Lesotho. This study will focus mainly on the teaching of Sesotho and English in both trial and non-trial schools. The research therefore will address the following questions:

1. What language do students prefer to learn and why?
2. What learner-centred teaching methods are being employed in the teaching of Sesotho and English?
3. What instructional learning tools do teachers use in a learner-centred classroom?
  - a. What benefits do teachers see in the use of these learner-centred learning tools?

- b. Which skills are enhanced? What evidence do teachers and learners have on this?
  - c. To what extent does learner-centred teaching promote syllabus coverage? What evidence do teachers have on this?
  - d. What other learner-centred methods can teachers and learners recommend?
4. How do teachers organise the students to promote a learner-centred approach?
5. If teachers consider that there are benefits in using the learner-centred approach, what can be done at different levels (the education system, school and classroom) to encourage more teachers to use such an approach and improve upon it?
- a. What support do teachers need to provide in a learner-centred classroom?
  - b. What suggestions are there for enhancing the learner-centred approach to the teaching and learning of English and Sesotho?

#### **1.4 Purpose and structure of the study**

The aim of this qualitative study is to gain a deeper understanding of the existing learner-centred strategies currently used in language classrooms, and to identify other learner-centred methods that might be used in the future. The study also seeks to learn more about the skills and benefits that teachers and learners associate with the learner-centred approach. This thesis therefore sets out to investigate the implementation and use of the learner-centred teaching approach to languages in Lesotho as per the current syllabus requirement.

#### **Thesis summary**

This introduction has discussed the background to the study. It focused on the constitution and relevant policies that are pertinent to language teaching in Lesotho as well as to language learning. Some of these policies indicate the

direction on teaching which involves using a learner-centred approach.

In order to address the research problem and the aim stated earlier, this first chapter explores a range of educational policies in Lesotho that informed the review of the curriculum, and ultimately necessitated the use of the learner-centred approach. These policies are drawn from different forums including national gatherings, reports from meetings, other policies, seminars and conferences and these provide a background which helps in understanding how the education system is conducted. This chapter further outlines the composition of the thesis and concludes with a mind map for the reader, so that it is possible to follow the unfolding of the chapters in this thesis.

Chapter two examines what other scholars know and say about the use of the learner-centred approach in teaching all subjects generally, and specifically, with reference to language teaching. It further addresses and points to a range of learner-centred teaching methods that can be employed in the teaching and learning process. These learner-centred strategies emanate from a number of educational theories in learning such as using socio-cognitive groups in learning, multiple intelligences and Bloom's taxonomy. The chapter explores the skills that are emphasised and practised while using learner-centred strategies.

The third chapter describes how this study was implemented. It provides detail about the participants and the three data collection techniques, namely classroom observation, survey questionnaires and focused discussions were employed. All three address how the policy of learner-centred approach is being applied in schools and what improvements can be suggested to maximise the use of the approach in the future. The main participants are teachers and learners from five schools in Lesotho.

Chapter four focuses on the findings relating to both learners and teachers. These findings cover a range of aspects. The first section concerns what language students prefer and why they prefer that language. Second, while discussing the learner-centred strategies, both learners and teachers address the relevance and impact of past experience. Third, there is a discussion of a diverse range of learner-centred strategies employed in Lesotho while teaching languages. These learner-centred strategies concern methods that can be used

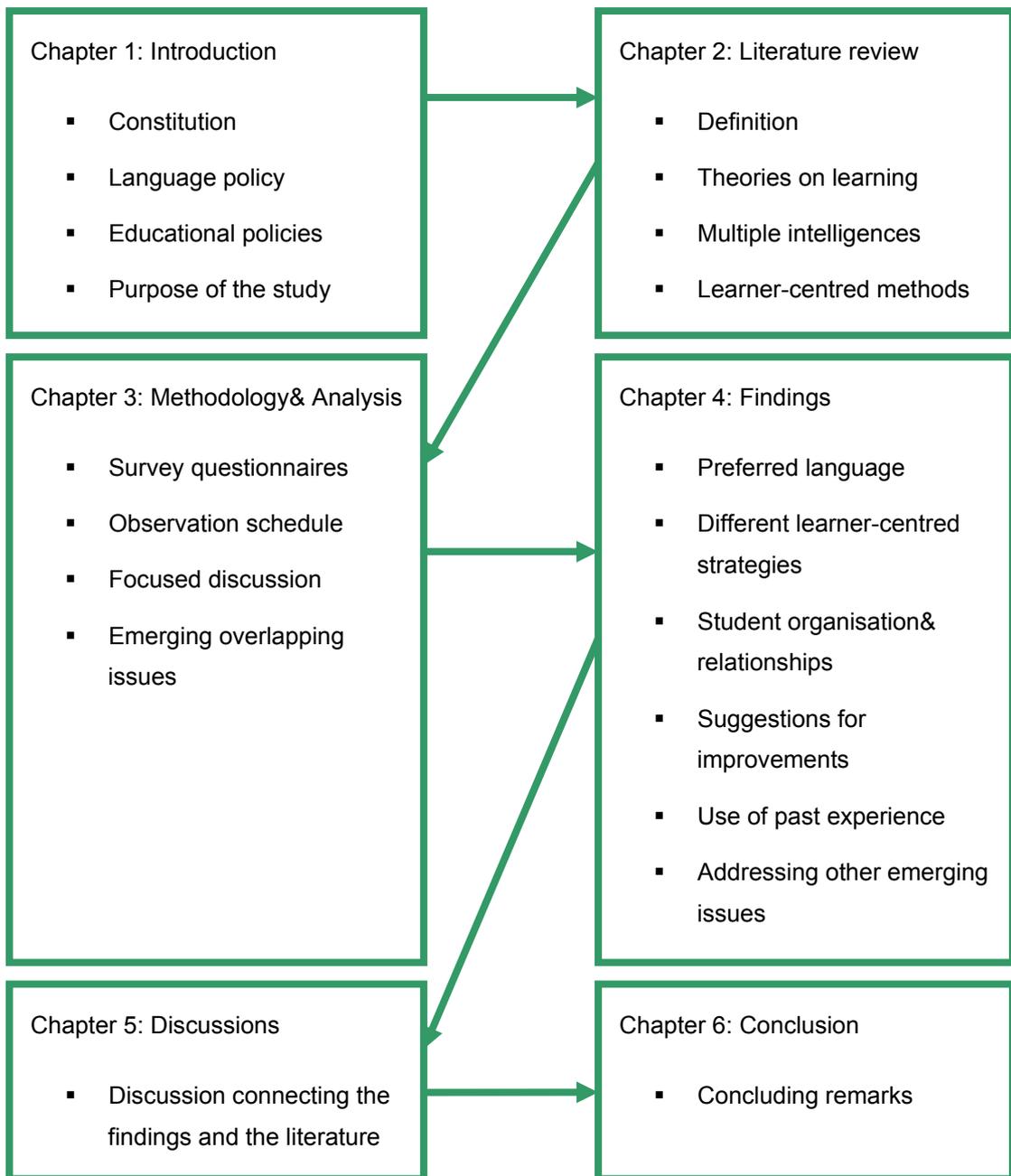
as organisational tools for working relations and student organisation. This comprises patterns of working together and working alone. Another pattern focuses on various learner-centred methods which teachers use as instructional tools for learning language content, and the benefits and skills that can be learned from each strategy. These include: drama, songs, games and pictures. Learners like to be taught via these methods and teachers state that they manage to control the learners effectively. The fourth category focuses on emerging national and global issues in learning including the skills that learners need to develop and acquire in relation to these issues. Finally, the fifth category deals with future improvements so that the learner-centred approach can be used efficiently and effectively in language learning. The improvements focus on various areas which when properly addressed, can bring about a suitable climate for learning.

Chapter five focuses on how the findings and literature might be connected to build new understanding.

The thesis concludes with chapter six, which outlines assumptions and possible future research that can be undertaken in relation to the use of learner-centred strategies. Furthermore, it considers different tasks that can be carried out in education in Lesotho to ensure that teachers are equipped with appropriate learner-centred teaching techniques so that they can teach effectively.

## 1.5 Mind map

This mind map is provided so that it can facilitate the easy reading of this piece of work. It provides a summary of the whole thesis.



*Figure 1: Mind map of the thesis*

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores how other scholars define the learner-centred approach. It further identifies what activities are thought to be the best approaches in order to engage learners for meaningful learning to take place. Specifically, some researchers address the use of learner-centred approaches in the teaching and learning of languages. The chapter also includes an outline of the range of skills that the learner-centred approach develops.

### **2.2 Definition**

The learner-centred approach is also sometimes referred to as “child-centred” or “pupil-centred” and is a specific approach to teaching. Here the main focus is on engaging the learner as opposed to the teacher-centred approach, where the focus is on the teacher. In the Lesotho context, a learner-centred approach requires “learners to be the focal point” of the language being taught (Ministry of Education 2002, p.5).

Substantial research has been undertaken in the attempt to define “learner-centred learning”. Weimer (2002) defines “learner-centred” as focusing on students’ needs, what and how they are learning and the conditions that contribute to their learning. It is an instruction that focuses on what learners are doing; this results in the building of responsibility in learning. The National Institute for Educational Development (1999) defines “learner-centred” education as an approach where the teacher puts learners’ needs at the centre of what they do in class rather than the teacher being the central figure. It is also an approach where learners learn from the teacher, from one another and on their own. Lambert and McCombs (1998) believe that the approach is particularly appropriate to the learner of the twenty-first century. Lambert et al. (1998) observe that this approach values the affective side of education, which focuses on quality interpersonal relationships, and fosters students’ competence and sense of well being. McCombs and Whisler (1997, p.9) define “learner-centred” as:

*The perspective that couples a focus on individual learners (their*

*heredity, experience, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities and needs) with a focus on learning (the best available knowledge about learning and how it occurs and about teaching practices that are most effective in promoting the highest levels of motivation, learning and achievement for all learners). This dual focus, then, informs and drives educational decision-making.*

According to Schrenko (1996) learner-centred instruction can be used in different ways while learning about a theme, a topic or a subject.

Learner-centred approach involves the teaching of life skills. The definition of learner-centred alludes to that of life skills. World Health Organisation (WHO), (1993) defines life skills as the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. These skills can be classified as core and non-core skills. World Health Organisation (1993) identified and considered a set of core life skills, those that they consider are essential in life. These include the ability to solve problems, the ability to make decisions, the capacity to think creatively, the capacity to think critically, the ability to communicate effectively, the capacity to feel empathy, the ability to handle emotions, the ability to handle tension and stress, knowing one's self, and the ability to establish and maintain interpersonal relations.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), (1997) also recognises several levels of life skills. These include: basic psychological and social skills (which are strongly shaped by cultural and social values), situation specific skills (such as negotiation, assertiveness, conflict resolution) and applied life skills (for example, challenging gender roles or refusing drugs). These are more or less similar to World Health Organisation's (1993) observation of skills.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2000), a body responsible for population growth, further acknowledges the relevance of life skills. In a paper presented to this body, Mridula (2000) observes that life skills interventions need to use experiential, participatory methods, and they are not effective if participants simply sit passively taking in information; participants have to be engaged in doing something.

In support of the above observation, World Health Organisation (1999) indicated that life skills learning is facilitated by the use of participatory learning methods and is based on a social learning process which includes: hearing an explanation of the skills in question; observation of the skills (modelling); practice of the skill in selected situations in a supportive learning environment; and feedback about individual performance skills.

The World Health Organisation (1999) also listed participatory methods which can be used to facilitate learning. They are methods that involve the learner. They include: group work, discussion, debate, story-telling, peer-supported learning and practical community development projects.

The World Health Organisation (1999) reflected on the relevance of teaching life skills and it advised that these skills are essential for a number of reasons. Of this range of reasons the following are of relevance to this study:

*promotion of healthy child and adolescent development*

*socialisation*

*preparing young for changing social circumstances*

*promotion of life long learning*

*promotion of peace, basic education, gender equity and good citizenship.*

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2000) also advocates life skills teaching to all levels of society but especially to the young ones. In UNESCO's report towards Education for All (EFA) six goals were addressed and goal number six focus on the teaching of life skills. The six goals were adopted at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000. These goals are

*1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children*

*2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in*

*difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality*

*3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes*

*4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults*

*5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality*

*6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.*

The government of Lesotho adheres to UNESCO's goals and is ensuring that life skills are also included in daily teaching. This focus on life skills by the government parallels and complements the interest in learner-centred teaching especially when those participatory methods are indeed learner-centred. Consequently, the teaching of life skills is included in this study.

### **2.3 Theories**

The shift towards a learner-centred approach is based on different theories of the teaching and learning process. Piaget's (1932) theories on sociocognitive conflict in small group learning, suggest that children learn a lot from each other. As learners interact directly with others, they become strongly motivated as they reconcile differences. Children understand their peers' ideas as they are more personal and less threatening than their teacher's ideas. From a constructivist view, Vygotsky (1978) argues that children's mental functioning develops first at the interpersonal level as they learn to internalise and

transform the content with others. This becomes important in the development of new understanding and skills. His theory involves the structured use of groups in the learning arena. Vygotsky (1986) reiterates that learning best occurs when individuals can make their own meaning by sharing their experiences with others through collaborative interactions.

## **2.4 Multiple intelligences**

Gardner (1983) proposes the theory of multiple intelligences in which he focuses on seven intelligences. Maulding (2002) observes another additional intelligence, emotional intelligence. R I C Publications (2004) observe and adapt similar intelligences too. These intelligences are potentialities that allow access to a specific type of content; they have to work in combination and are vital as they give an explanation on the differing nature of human beings. In most cases the intelligences cannot be dealt with individually but as interconnected ways of thinking and learning. These include: linguistic and verbal intelligence, musical and rhythmic intelligence, logical and mathematical intelligence, spatial and visual intelligence, bodily kinaesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence (Gardner 1983) and emotional intelligence (Maulding, 2002).

Gardner (1983) observes that the purpose of multiple intelligences is to assist learners to develop and learn through drawing from a wide range of intelligences. According to Stanford (2003) the theory of multiple intelligences can function not as a remedy to one-sidedness in teaching but as an organisational tool that 'facilitates and synthesises existing educational pedagogy' (Stanford 2003). In this way the application of multiple intelligences further provides a broad range of stimulating curricula. Stanford further observes that this theory can be the avenue for accomplishing what good teachers have always done in the provision of varied opportunities for students to learn and show evidence of learning. The use of multiple intelligences further provides a framework for teachers to reflect on their best teaching methods with the intention of understanding why these methods work well with some students but not with others. This helps teachers expand their teaching to include a broader range of methods, materials and techniques and so reach a more diverse range of learners. Stanford (2003) continues to observe the theory as

opening the door to a wide range of teaching strategies that can easily be implemented in the classroom. These will offer teachers an opportunity to develop innovative teaching strategies.

R I C Publications (2004) has adapted these multiple intelligences that are suggested by Gardner, so that teachers and learners can use them in their daily teaching. They call verbal and linguistic intelligence "word wise", logical and mathematical "logic wise"; visual and spatial "picture wise"; bodily-kinaesthetic "body wise"; musical and rhythmic "music wise"; interpersonal "people wise"; and intrapersonal "self wise". The names are simplified so that learners can use and understand them.

Maulding (2002) suggests an additional intelligence, which is emotional intelligence. This is believed to correlate with the other intelligences as it is concerned with knowing one's emotions and managing them, as well as knowing and being able to relate with other people, skills which are required for monitoring the emotional environment and managing other peoples' emotions too.

## **2.5 Bloom's Taxonomy**

Researchers such as Crawford and Brown (2002) and Savitz (1999) and others believe that Gardner's multiple intelligences have some relation and connection with Bloom's taxonomy where all the domains are used in order to develop levels of higher order thinking skills (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill and Krathwohl 1971). Combined with the multiple intelligences, Bloom's taxonomy can bring about the composition of content thinking and critical thinking as well as creating new thinking. Bloom's domains are: knowledge where learners simply recall or recognise information; comprehension in which learners can translate and interpret in order to show how much information they understood; application which requires learners to select, transfer and use of data and principles to complete and solve tasks; analysis which requires the learner's ability to distinguish, classify and relate differing information; synthesis calls for integration, development, analysis of ideas in order to build a new information and evaluation in which learners can judge, assess, critique and justify the given information. When undertaking each of these domains, multiple

intelligences are used as a tool. Therefore the domains in Bloom's taxonomy complement Gardner's intelligences.

## **2.6 Policy implementation and impact on educational policy**

Marzano, Pickering and Pollock (2004) observe that in order for learning to take place there must be evidence of the development, implementation and impact of educational policy on teachers' practice. This results in teachers influencing students' learning. Marzano et al (2004) also observe that there is sometimes a difference in what teachers say and what they actually do in the classroom.

## **2.7 Benefits of having and using the learner-centred approach**

Schwartz and Pollishuke (1991) state the main goal of a child-centred approach is to encourage children to develop greater decision-making and problem-solving skills and hence to promote greater independence. This approach, therefore, involves and engages learners' minds in creative activities. Schrenko (1996) observes that the learner-centred approach promotes each student's internal motivation and instructional practices such as modelling, asking higher order questions and mediating thoughts.

Hands-on problem solving is effective in helping students learn more abstract concepts, and positive feedback is most effective in encouraging and allowing learners' multiple opportunities to practise and improve their learning. In this manner learners are encouraged to be creative in their own learning as all learners are of different abilities. The teacher enables learning by creating conditions that will cater for these varying abilities. In this way the teacher becomes a facilitator in the learning process through helping learners to develop 'individual thinking and problem solving potentials' (Schrenko 1996, p.7). Through interviewing and assessing the students' thinking processes, the teacher also becomes a mediator of learning. Consequently, the teacher enables students to construct new meanings about important problems, concepts and issues. This then helps learners to plan and evaluate the thinking processes they can use to gather information, attempt to solve problems, and to make decisions.

According to Schrenko (1996) the use of this approach enhances learners' life

skills. Using a learner-centred approach helps learners to be more independent, resourceful, interactive and cooperative as well as enabling them to build interpersonal relationships. At the same time, this learning builds on prior knowledge that the learners already possess. Schrenko (1996) further observes that the approach promotes each student's internal motivation and that the instructional practices require hands-on activities. In the twenty-first century the business world demands that workers function as a team. Many students will want to enter careers in business when they finish their schooling. It is therefore important for teachers to teach cooperative skills as early as possible (Schrenko 1996).

Research indicates that thinking skills can best be acquired and applied in cooperative groups where students are more willing to engage in problem-solving tasks. The support and responsibility from group members enhances learning and leaves room for a favourable climate for risk taking and increased learning (Bellanca and Fogarty 1991). Therefore, the learner-centred approach fosters cooperation rather than competition, as learners need to work collaboratively and have to use social and cooperative skills. In this way students develop a sense of responsibility and can transfer the learned skills into real life situations. Internal motivation becomes a drive so that learners are encouraged to reach for higher objectives. In this way self-esteem plays a very important role as it supports the learner's ability to create self-confidence through the completion of meaningful work. Bellanca et al. (1991) further observe that the learner-centred approach enhances certain attributes in the learners and as a result promotes various life skills such as:

- *individual differences are put aside, competition is reduced*
- *students practise interpersonal skills and hence develop feelings of individual self-worth*
- *learners benefit from exploring issues from different view points*
- *as learners work with each other with different levels of maturity, a sense of community and cooperation develops*

- *students make stronger connections, see interrelationships among subjects and have a positive attitude towards school and learning*
- *flexibility in placing students in appropriate settings makes them see themselves as part of a continuum.*

## **2.8 Creating or constructing new knowledge using past experience**

Lambert et al (1998) argue that adopting a learner-centred approach means that learners can bring knowledge to their learning from beyond the classroom, such as from the environment, their interests and beliefs. This knowledge brings about engagement and personal responsibility in learning. In addition, self-development and interpersonal relationships provide a positive environment for learning. Lambert et al (1998) also argue that relevant and meaningful constructive learning engages learners in creating their own knowledge and understanding by connecting new learning with their prior knowledge and experience. Gillespie (2002) also supports this idea of knowledge construction by learners through their use of prior knowledge and experience, which assists them to shape meaning and acquire new knowledge. Moore (1999) observes that in constructivist learning, students come to class having a wide range of previous learning and experiences which enable optimal learning to occur only when information is made meaningful. Good and Brophy (1997) further suggest that effective learning occurs when learners can create meaning by linking new information to what they already know. This helps in generating new combinations of knowledge which bring about personal meaning and perspective.

According to the National Institute for Educational Development (1999) the teaching activities used with the learner-centred approach put learners at the centre of teaching. Learning must begin by using or finding out the learners' past experience and skills as well as their existing understanding of the topic. These activities are then used to build on and to extend the learner's knowledge.

Linking with the above observations, Freiberg and Driscoll (2000) state that one way teachers can foster and nurture linkages of old and new knowledge is by

using cooperative activities, role-playing and simulations that make classroom teaching more student-centred. In using these various activities, academic diversity and social exchange within a subject is brought about, increasing its proximity to real life student experience. Furthermore, linking new information to past experience promotes the learning of difficult and remote concepts.

## **2.9 Learner-centred strategies**

Teachers, when using the learner-centred approach, guide learners in acquiring new knowledge and skills as they facilitate the learning process through the use of various learner-centred activities (National Institute for Educational Development 1999). This requires teachers to select activities appropriately so that they emphasise a variety of skills including problem-solving skills. Consequently, students will be able to practice decision-making skills and be flexible in choosing methods that will make the learning experience more relevant and meaningful.

### **2.9.1 Cooperative learning**

Cooperative learning is one learner-centred strategy or pedagogical practice which promotes learning, higher level thinking, prosocial behaviour, and greater understanding of students with diverse learning and social adjustment needs (Cohen and Manion 1994). Cooperative learning is similar to group work but more focused and structured. Gillies and Ashman (2003) argue that tasks are completed more easily in a group than individually. In doing an activity group members provide each other with information, prompts and reminders as well as encouragement. As a result of this, learners have opportunities to model their thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills and receive feedback, which will help them in constructing new understanding, knowledge and skills. Poel, Homan and Flaman (1994) observe that cooperative learning has been used for some time and is not a new concept. Johnson, Johnson and Stanne (2000) believe that cooperative learning requires and builds on the following critical characteristics that overlap:

- *face to face interaction, which is brought about by the arrangement of learners in a small group, either in heterogenous or homogenous groups. This encourages*

*learners to share and support each other*

- *each learner becomes responsible for the success and collaboration of the group together with mastering the assigned tasks (individual accountability)*
- *learners get taught, coached and monitored in the use of social skills which enhance the group work (cooperative social skills)*
- *learners also assist each other in completing the learning task by striving to achieve a common goal, having group rewards, role assignments and other means which assist the group (positive interdependence)*
- *they also reflect on how well they work as a group to complete the task and how they can improve their teamwork (group processing).*

Fogarty (1991) also talks about cognitive cooperative learning, and he observes that it requires combining various methods that promote higher order thinking. He uses the BUILD model that is characterised with the following prominent tools for learning:

- ***B**uilding of higher order thinking; where students are challenged to think deeply and to transfer subject matter*
- ***U**niting different learners in face-to-face interactions; ensuring that there is formation of trust among the group members, enabling teamwork*
- ***I**ndividual learning and responsibility where every learner becomes accountable to master all skills and knowledge, promoting individuality*
- ***L**ooking over and discussing the interactions that help students to learn. Learners are expected to process and evaluate their thinking, feelings and social skills*

- *Developing the social skills that are essential in cooperative life by providing unambiguous training in the skills. Learners are helped to master these cooperative abilities.*

This model may also be used for integrated thematic instruction of which the major component is cooperative learning. Cohen et al (1994) declare cooperative learning as a pedagogical practice which promotes learning, higher level thinking, pro-social behaviour, greater understanding of children with diverse learning, social and adjustment needs. Further, Gillies et al (2003) argue that the increased emphasis on group learning is a reaction to societal changes including a new emphasis on teamwork in the business sector. Also, Thousand, Villa and Nevin (1994) observe that when using cooperative learning, groups are essential. In the use of groups, knowledge is learned first, then skills, strategies and procedures. Students apply each of these to show their individual mastery of the material since they learn together but then perform individually. She concludes that Piaget and Vygotsky identify this as a way in which the mind constructs knowledge and invents learning. Researchers show that group learning leads to academic and cognitive benefits, promotes student learning and achievement and also increases the critical thinking skills which promote greater transfer of learning (Slavin and Gutierrez 1992; Brandon and Hollingshead 1999; Cockrell, Caplow and Donaldson 2000; Johnson et al. 2000).

Both Cheng and Warren (2000) and the National Institute for Educational Development (1999) argue that there is an increased emphasis on group learning as a reaction to societal changes, including a new emphasis on teamwork in the business sector. Group learning is believed to lead to academic and cognitive benefits, promote students' learning and achievement, increase the development of critical thinking skills and encourage discussion and communication skills. It allows learners of different abilities to work together and promotes greater transfer of learning. Group learning aids in the development of social skills like communication, presentation, problem solving, leadership, delegation and organisation, and develops interpersonal intelligence (Gardner 1983). This is observed in being able to work cooperatively with others in a group or a pair and to communicate verbally and non-verbally with other people.

Emotional intelligence which is the ability to motivate oneself, exercise self-control, manage one's emotions, and recognise others' emotions, feelings, beliefs and intentions is also pertinent here. This will lead to understanding others, their feelings and being able to handle relationships (Maulding 2002).

### **2.9.2 Using visuals and pictures in learning**

Gardner's (1983) classification of multiple intelligences considers spatial and visual intelligence to be focusing on visuals and pictures. Spatial and visual intelligence is observed in learners using visual images which help in constructing knowledge. R I C Publications (2004) adds to this observation that learning is most effective in activities involving visualisation. These activities include watching movies, interpreting images, puzzles or games. Adding to the above statements, Canning-Wilson (1996) observes that visuals are very important not only in learning but also in examinations. These visuals can include various forms of illustrations, pictures and figures. Canning-Wilson (1996) further states that visuals can enhance the clarity of any given meaning by creating joint links; they can help learners draw out language from their own knowledge or personal experiences. This will then allow learners to organise knowledge into semantic or associative clusters. It is further observed that visuals are vital in a classroom as research has shown that imagery facilitates learning significantly. When coupled with texts, visuals encourage learners to think about the process of the language more fully as they help individuals to make sense of surroundings in daily life. Therefore, all visuals provide room for prediction, inference and deduction of information from a variety of sources. As such, pictures frequently draw a response from learners. This response may not be elicited through other methods.

Canning-Wilson (1996) further observes that it is through visual aids that learners are able to generate opinions, manipulate situations as well as expand and interpret the given images. In addition, pictures can help to bring the outside world into the classroom, can create a social setting and as a result, the learner is immersed in learning. Visuals can also make situations appear more authentic and this helps learners to use appropriate language and structures in their descriptions. Lin (2003) also notes the effectiveness of using television, multiple media and dramatic activities as instructional tools in language

classroom learning, whether for young learners or adults. These visual arts may be able to reach more students in the classroom and hence better meet students' different learning styles than would be the case with purely traditional teaching methods. Further, Lin (2003), refers to the work of Flood, Heath and Lapp (1997) who state that visual arts include dramatic performances, comic books and television viewing. The communicative arts - reading, writing and speaking - exist as integrated elements in the visual arts and are therefore very helpful in making learning meaningful. These visual arts motivate students to become involved in the communicative arts. For students, both young and old, television can be an effective tool in literacy instruction when it is incorporated into reading instruction. Reluctant readers may become motivated and hence improve their reading fluency (Lin 2003). They also argue that television programmes can motivate readers to read the captions in order to understand the story, therefore also assisting them to organise their ideas more clearly (Lin 2003).

### **2.9.3 Role-play, simulation and drama**

Schrenko (1996) suggests that role-play, simulation and games are learner-centred strategies that can be used in achieving cooperative learning. Lin (2003) also argues that drama can be an instructional tool in language classroom learning, which can be used by both adult and young learners. She states that according to Smith (1972) drama directly involves learners and as they become involved they become more interested in learning. Drama involves using a variety of communication skills to convey feelings, attitudes and expressions in language learning.

To further show the relevance of the use of drama in literacy education, McMaster (1988) affirms that drama is an effective medium of literacy in nine areas. Five of these are considered to be of high relevance. Drama can:

- *provide students with a meaningful environment for practising oral reading repeatedly in order to develop fluency*
- *provides students with opportunities to acquire meaning visually, aurally and kinaesthetically of new vocabulary*

- *helps students acquire the knowledge of word order, phrasing and punctuation that contribute to the meaning of a written sentence*
- *provide students with opportunities to monitor their own comprehension*
- *develops effective reading strategies*
- *be an assessment tool since it provides immediate feedback about students' understanding of new reading materials (McMaster 1988).*

Lin (2003) further observes that these dramatic activities provide meaningful contexts and motivation to practice literacy use.

Morado, Koenig and Wilson (1999) believe that drama, music and movement are interwoven into meaningful performances and are beneficial in literacy learning. Rossi (2000) supports the idea by saying that literature should try to use drama so that children can learn language and develop literacy in supportive and meaningful environments. Gardner's (1983) intelligence that relates to this strategy is bodily kinaesthetic (body wise) intelligence. In this particular intelligence, learners can use their bodies to express emotions through drama or role-play, and to play games and to participate in songs and dances.

#### **2.9.4 Games and debates**

Even though their main focus is on adult language learners, Langran and Purcell's (1994) views can be adapted to secondary language learners. They argue that using games to support language learning is vital as learners get a real chance to speak and be creative. In some cases, games are used as an icebreaker in order to loosen the barriers that can exist in a group or class. Games involve using a variety of communication skills to convey feelings, attitudes and expressions. Games can therefore encourage involvement and participation from learners. It is also observed that language games encourage repetition which is very important in language learning. Langran et al (1994) further define games as ways of creating situations in the classroom which

give learners opportunities to use the language they have already acquired with maximum possible free expression in order to fulfil a simple task, solve a problem or communicate a piece of information. There are a variety of games which can be used by both teachers and learners to emphasise certain issues such as guessing games, memory games, putting things in order, comparing and finding differences, word games, simulations and icebreakers. All these types of games can be used to provide motivation in language learning and teaching. They can either be used collectively or individually depending on the aspect of language being taught.

More than one of Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences corresponds with games. First, there is logical or mathematical intelligence, which is observed in using problem-solving skills and critical thinking, and where connections and differences can be observed. Logical intelligence includes an interest in puzzles, riddles and quizzes. Spatial and visual intelligence which is observed in the construction of knowledge through pictures and drawings is also evident in games. R I C Publications (2004) adds to this observation that learning is effective and occurs in activities involving visualisation, noting that such activities include watching movies, interpreting images, visuals, puzzles or games. Further, bodily kinaesthetic intelligence (body wise) is employed in games which require learners to use their bodies to express emotions and to play games. The use of these intelligences in a learner-centred approach is achieved by the use of drama and role-play, games, songs and dances.

Langran et al. (1994) advance a number of benefits for using various games in language learning. Other than the main focus being motivation, games can also simulate real life situations effectively. They can provide meaningful and relevant language. Games enable learners to practice the structure or vocabulary in language; this leads to using communicative games to aid conversational skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Games can be a useful strategy for revision as learners are expected to reuse the language they have learned previously. In some instances they help learners to ask other learners or the teacher questions and this builds confidence in learners as they realise that they can cope with real life situations. Games are fun and can help to create a relaxed, friendly and cooperative atmosphere in class. As a result, they can provide variety, raise motivation and maintain

interest. In addition to the fun, games also help in building better social relationships and in learners giving each other greater support when required. As an effective way of learning, games can also be useful for examination practice where learners can be assigned with role-play situations in order to test their fluency, confidence and the ability to improvise (Langran et al. 1994).

#### **2.9.5 Songs, music and dances**

Domke (1991) observes that music can be used as a challenging language learning activity which can assist in making a creative classroom where activities move beyond reliance on textbooks. Music can introduce students to cultural information or characteristics. Since music and songs are such important learning activities, Waller and Eddington (2001) also observe that songs could be used not only in teaching language but even to teach content such as civil war in social studies. Waller et al (2001) suggest that songs help to shape learners' daily existence as they provide motivation. Students can gain valuable insight into the culture of a particular period and locale through using songs and music. Algozzine and Douville (2001) further state that songs and music are useful for developing young students' oral skills, and songs strengthen not only students' oral language development but also their reading skills.

Lems (2001) states that music can be used with adult classes and can be adapted to lower classes as well. Music can be used in various scenarios: it can create a learning environment; it can build listening, comprehension, speaking, reading and writing skills; it can be used to increase vocabulary; and it can be used to expand cultural knowledge. Songs, especially the lyrics, can be used for various purposes such as: listening and oral activities where learners can summarise orally or give oral presentations; reading and writing activities in cases such as researching about the composer of the song and circumstances that led to the composition of the song; vocabulary building activities; and cultural knowledge activities. Songs are a rich mine of information on: human relations, ethics, customs, history, humour poems, regional and cultural differences. Music is a strategy which involves using a variety of communication skills to convey feelings, attitudes and expressions in language learning.

Various intelligences are present when using songs, music and dance. Musical and rhythmic intelligence (music wise) connects well here as this can be observed in songs, music, poems and dances and helps in the understanding and communicating of ideas and meanings. The different tones, tunes, sounds from the environment, human voice and musical instruments can also promote this intelligence. Also connected with music and songs is bodily kinaesthetic intelligence (body wise), when learners use their bodies to express emotions in music and dances, and to play games (Gardner 1983).

#### **2.9.6 Working alone**

Lunt (2001) in a report on classroom strategies, states that learners seem to like to work alone when they want to express their own feelings or views without being distracted by others. She further states that learners prefer to be working alone in a number of situations or stages: when they need to concentrate; when writing and when they need to maintain their own ideas without influence from others; and when they are required to express their own opinion. It appears that learners' preference for working alone depends on the work situation and type of task in hand (Lunt 2001). Working alone involves using a variety of communication skills to convey feelings, attitudes and expressions in language learning. The intelligence observed here is intrapersonal intelligence (Gardner 1983). This deals with self thinking processes, self-reflection and self-knowledge and the understanding that leads to making decisions. Individuals are able to know their abilities and use discretion as to how best to use them. This is particularly evident when learners work alone. Maulding's (2002) emotional intelligence also features here. This is the ability to motivate oneself, exercise self-control, manage one's emotions, recognise others' emotions, and handle relationships.

#### **2.9.7 Graphic designs**

Schrenko (1996) suggests the use of different graphic design strategies such as webs, Venn diagrams, matrices and pyramids. Even though these are mathematical concepts, they can be used to show connections and interrelationships in language. Students can also use them to show their understanding of what they are learning. Various multiple intelligences (Gardner 1983) are addressed in the use of graphic designs. These can be logical and

mathematical intelligence, visual intelligence (picture wise) and possibly bodily kinaesthetic intelligence. The integration of these intelligences can help in language learning.

#### **2.9.8 Thematic instruction**

A substantial amount of research has been undertaken to define thematic instruction and to suggest how it can be effectively used. According to (Schrenko 1996) learner-centred instruction can be used to learn a theme, a topic or a subject. It may be used for integrated thematic instruction of which the major component is cooperative learning. Schrenko (1996) encourages the use of thematic instruction in order to foster whole language learning. Consequently, while using this instruction, learning is put in context so that it becomes meaningful.

Randle (1997) also talks of thematic instruction as the integration of all disciplines to present students with learning experiences that are based in real world application. These experiences are structured in order to encourage higher-order learning and the development of critical habits that students require to become lifelong learners. In this way learners will understand skills and concepts, and know how to apply them in real situations. Randle (1997) further observes that the curriculum for this instruction has to be planned around real problems rather than isolated facts. Also, as well as attempting to demonstrate to students that all areas of learning are connected, the instruction stresses that each student is responsible for his or her learning and, therefore, that learning is a lifelong journey.

On the same issue Barton and Smith (2000) confirm that thematic instruction has to be broad enough to provide authentic experiences to students in more than one content area. It should also offer a range of learning experiences for students, and give them choices in the projects they pursue and the ways they demonstrate their learning. Such integrated instruction addresses content from several subjects simultaneously and the following benefits are observed: teachers make better use of classroom time to address content in more depth by removing artificial divisions among subjects; students see the connections within the content areas and are enabled to understand important concepts and

ideas more easily; teachers build on students' background knowledge and assess their skills and concepts through real tasks that they encounter in their lives outside the classroom.

Dickinson and Young (1998) suggest that thematic instruction is a strategy where disciplines are merged together, as there are no divisions enabling learners to recognise each discipline as separate. Thematic instruction focuses on relating all activities to the theme without regard to the objectives and goals of individual disciplines. For instance, a science topic is used to develop the practical skills of reading, writing and organising information. Even though thematic instruction can be used, Dickinson et al (1998) indicates there can be disadvantages when used independently; it therefore has to be used with other learner-centred strategies.

Most, if not all of Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences feature in thematic learning as working on a particular theme calls for using a number of strategies and these strategies correspond to different intelligences.

#### **2.9.9 Areas for consideration**

From the above literature it is observed that learner-centred approaches to teaching vary in style, but are consistent in providing learners with the opportunity to work in groups, inquire and investigate themes and ideas, and in recognising prior learning that students bring to the classroom. Furthermore, it is evident that learner-centred approaches develop a range of skills that operate at an interpersonal and intrapersonal level. This literature connects with and supports the Constitution of Lesotho, article 28, which proclaims that education should cater for the diverse needs of Basotho children and ultimately the diverse aims of the MOET in the different policies. Although Lesotho is culturally a very different context from those in which many of the studies on learner-centred approaches have taken place, learners in Lesotho also need to develop skills in working together academically and in inquiring and directing their own learning. The aims of the MOET in Lesotho are well observed in the literature on the learner-centred approach and how it can best be delivered. The following chapters will consider the ways in which a learner-centred approach is perceived and applied in some schools in Lesotho.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The aim of this research is to inquire into the use of the learner-centred teaching approach in the teaching of languages (both Sesotho and English) in secondary schools in Lesotho. In addition the aim of the study is to gather information about possible improvements in language teaching and learning in Lesotho. Being a qualitative study, defined by Lawton and Gordon (1993) as a study of particular social situation, the intention was not only to gain a deeper understanding and report the findings, but also to bring about certain improvements. This study can also be defined as an educational ethnography which Goetz and LeCompte (1984) describe as rich, descriptive data about the contexts, activities, and beliefs of participants in relation to educational settings and practices.

In this study differing data collection methods were employed. As Nunan (1992) suggests, using a variety of data collection techniques ensures the validity of data. In this study observation sessions, survey questionnaires and a focused discussion were undertaken jointly in order to investigate the use of learner-centred approaches in the teaching of languages in Lesotho. These three different techniques provided complimentary opportunities for collecting data. The techniques, when combined, provided triangulated evidence about existing perceptions and practices.

### **3.1 Participants**

There were five participating schools each of which has classes from Form (A-E) Form A is for those learners who are doing their first year of secondary education. Forms B, C, D and E then follow on respectively, Form E is those students undertaking their fifth year of secondary education. This study focussed on learners in Forms B and D and on their teachers. In each school the study involved learners and the two language teachers as the primary sources of information, as they were directly involved in the use of the teaching strategies and thus both would be helpful in the investigation on the use of these learner-centred strategies. Ten teachers (five teaching Sesotho and five teaching English) and thirty students (fifteen in Form B and fifteen in Form D) were invited to participate in the survey. Form B students, in their second year

of junior secondary school, were aged between twelve and fifteen years; and Form D students, in their fourth year of senior secondary school were aged between fifteen and twenty years.

As shown in the table below, the actual number of learners participating in the study was twenty-seven, not thirty as planned. There were more females than males, because in Lesotho more girls than boys are present in schools as the girl child is given more advantages than the boy child.

School	Teachers		Students		Actual Participants	
	Sesotho	English	Form D	Form B	Teachers	Students
<b>A</b>	1	1	3	3		6
<b>B</b>	1	1	3	3		6
<b>C</b>	1	1	3	3		6
<b>D</b>	1	1	3	3		5
<b>E</b>	1	1	3	3		4
<b>Total</b>	5	5	15	15	7	27

*Figure 2: Participants in this study*

Classes have approximately forty-five students although in some areas these numbers might increase or decrease. Both the teachers and the learners who were invited to complete the survey questionnaires were from the classrooms observed by the researcher. At each school, the same teachers who were observed in their classrooms were also invited to participate in the questionnaires and the focused discussion.

Teachers were aged between twenty-three and sixty-five, the age of retirement. There were both male and female participants but achieving equal representation was not considered to be critical in this situation. Generally, in Lesotho there are more female than male teachers. Looking at the teachers' experience two had more than fifteen years, one had between eleven and fifteen years, three had five to ten years, and finally one had less than five

years teaching experience. The qualifications held by the teachers also varied: four teachers held Bachelor of Education qualifications while two held Bachelor of Arts (Education) and one held a Post Graduate Certificate of Education.

The Ministry of Education in Lesotho was briefed about the conduct of this study. Then, through a letter, the Ministry of Education and Training informed principals that their school had been identified to participate in this study. The principals then let the teachers and students know about the study so that they were able to make an informed decision about participation in the three stages of data collection. The principals of the participating schools then signed a consent form on behalf of the students' parents (see Appendix A, p.158). This is an accepted practice in Lesotho as the principal is considered to be the overseer of all the students. Teachers signed a consent form indicating their preparedness to participate in the three stages of the data collection, that is, the classroom observations, the survey questionnaires and the focused discussion. Prior to the whole process teachers were given 'Information to Participants' (see Appendix B, p.161).

The teachers in this study were given pseudonyms in order to help relate their findings in a more informal and personal setting. The names are Thabelo, Hope, Lerato, Lintle, Lineo, Patience and Busi.

### **3.2 Validity**

In order to facilitate analysis, all stages of the data collection were conducted using English. Both learners and teachers were not assisted while responding to the questionnaires. Notes were taken during classroom observations and focused discussion and, with the permission of the participants, the focused discussion was taped in order to back up the notes.

Risks were minimised by informing the participants about the detail of the study, by giving them an opportunity to ask questions in relation to the study, asking them to sign a consent form (see Appendix A, p.157) and assuring them that the data would not be disclosed outside the group. All information collected during the study was stored in the School of Education at Victoria University and access was limited to the student researcher, principal and associate investigators. All participants were informed that they were free to withdraw

from the study at any time. However, no one withdrew.

### **3.3 Sampling**

In this study, purposive sampling was used in order to select unique cases that were especially informative (Neuman 1997). In Lesotho there are 250 secondary schools of which five were invited to participate in this study. The schools were selected to include both trial (two) and non-trial (three) schools as well as both in town (two) and out of town (three) schools. Also the schools were chosen to represent different areas in the country. Some schools were a distance from the capital city; some were in the centre of town; and others were in the outskirts of town.

As the purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding about successful learner-centred teaching, the schools were also selected on the basis of their demonstrated commitment to, and reputation for, successful implementation of learner-centred approach. Those teachers who have shown initiative and leadership in the implementation of learner-centred classroom strategies, and who have shared their expertise with others, were invited to participate in the study. In order to identify the students, the participating teachers were asked to identify three students from each of Forms B and D. For each cohort they were asked to identify a low, middle and high achieving student. These students were identified on the basis of existing records of their achievement in both Sesotho and English languages. It is noteworthy that because of the high female to male ratio in schools, most of the learners' respondents were females.

Other schools were not selected even though they practice learner-centred teaching. The researcher had her own children attending school at two of these schools, so bias was avoided by eliminating them. The researcher had done most of her teaching at one school so it was not considered because of the influence she may have had at the school. Others were too remote, and not easily accessible within the time limit of the data collection.

### **3.4 Classroom Observations**

In order to generate data Wiersma (2000) argues that classroom observations

can be undertaken for the purpose of studying and understanding the learners' behaviour as well as getting first hand information about the actual learner-centred strategies applied in the classrooms.

In this study not only the learners' behaviour was observed but the teachers' behaviour as well. The observation schedule noted the skills emphasised or learned in a particular lesson. Hook (1981) indicates that observations are useful in getting first hand information about actual behaviour. The observer used various techniques to observe and record different strategies used by both teachers and learners. Before the researcher entered the classes for observing, the teachers were given the copy of the schedule so that they knew what was to be observed and to make it clear that they were not being tested or examined. At the beginning of the class, learners were told about the purpose of the presence of the researcher. Then at the end of the class, the researcher was asked to say a few words of encouragement to both the learners and the teacher.

The non-participant observations were carried out in order to find out what strategies were used, how they were applied and what skills were being developed in every day teaching and learning process (Cohen et al. 1994). Most lessons take forty to forty-five minutes. The observations were both structured and unstructured (Cohen et al. 1994, p.108), (see Appendix B, p.167). These classroom observations gave first hand information about the learner-centred strategies applied in the classrooms.

Following the distribution of information, classroom observations were undertaken in classes that had agreed to participate in this aspect of the study. Permission was given by the principals to conduct observations in four classes in each of the five participating schools. The classes observed involved two in the second year of junior secondary (Form B) and two classes in the first year of senior secondary (Form D). In both levels, observation was for English and Sesotho languages as shown in the table below.

<b>Sesotho</b>	<b>English</b>
One Form B class	One Form B class
One Form D class	One Form D class

*Figure 3: Observed classes*

In total, out of the twenty classes that were included in the observation plan, only sixteen were observed. At the time the data collection took place, it was also time for external examinations. Some teachers were invigilating those external examinations and therefore were not available for observation.

Classroom observation undertaken in classes of different levels was carried out in order to find out:

- what learner-centred strategies were used in the teaching and learning process
- how these methods were applied and what skills were acquired from them
- the teachers' and students' roles in the teaching and learning process
- general emerging issues that were addressed in the teaching process even though they were not stipulated in the syllabus.

The observation checklist (see Appendix D, p.167) was used to record what took place in class. In each school, four classes were observed, including two in the second year of junior secondary (Form B) and two classes in the first year of senior secondary (Form D) except for three schools where only two classes were observed. At both levels observations were for both English and Sesotho languages. These classes were selected because they tend to be more settled, as they were not engaged in any external examinations. In addition, data collection was carried out towards the end of the second session (September-November), which allowed students to be in the system for close to the whole year. It was therefore believed that they could provide sound information

regarding the use of the learner-centred approach.

### **3.5 Survey Questionnaires**

This descriptive method of collecting data Cohen et al. (1994) facilitated the exploration of learner-centred practices in language classrooms in Lesotho. Survey questionnaires were administered to both teachers and learners following the classroom observation; they required approximately thirty minutes to complete. The piloting of survey questionnaires in two secondary schools in Lesotho assisted in effecting modifications. They were used in order to elicit the required information (Nunan 1992). The survey questionnaires revealed patterns of teachers' and learners' perceptions about classroom practice.

Two survey questionnaires (see Appendix E pp 169- 175) one for teachers and one for learners were used to survey participants about their responses to the research questions. The survey questionnaires for teachers and for learners and the classroom observations provided three different and complimentary opportunities for collecting data to meet the aims of the research. The questionnaires contained both closed and open-ended questions and addressed the same issues as those in the observation schedule. This facilitated the process of analysis and comparison of data from different sources. Participation in the questionnaire was voluntary and, once completed, the researcher collected the filled survey questionnaires. Out of the thirty survey questionnaires for learners, twenty-seven responded, while for teachers, out of ten survey questionnaires, seven responded. In both questionnaires and observations pseudonyms are used throughout the study.

The survey questionnaires sought information about:

- the various learner-centred teaching strategies used in language classrooms
- teachers' reasons for using the learner-centred methods
- reasons why learners prefer one of the languages they have to learn
- the skills that learners are exposed to in every-day learning
- use of past experience in the learning and teaching process

- emergent issues that are addressed in the teaching process even though they were not stipulated in the syllabus
- the perceived benefits of adopting a learner-centred approach
- strategies for encouraging greater use of learner-centred approach
- suggestions for learner-centred methods which might be used in the future.

Items in the survey questionnaires for teachers and learners provided opportunities for learners and teachers to make suggestions about other learner-centred strategies and improvements to the general teaching of languages.

### **3.6 Focused Discussion**

Following an initial analysis of the data from questionnaires and classroom observations, a focused discussion was held to provide a third source of information. This was a follow-up from the initial analysis of data from classroom observations and survey questionnaires. The focused discussion was held in order to verify, refine and finally explore further information, in order to shape the final analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) note that group interviews in a qualitative research study, can be data rich because they are elaborative, draw on group diversity and can be stimulating for participants. Teachers from the participating schools, who were observed and responded to the survey questionnaire, were also invited to the discussion, which lasted for two hours. The discussion addressed the emerging cross-school themes and focused on the salient points. Out of the ten teachers only seven managed to come for the session. This research strategy also provided an opportunity for checking on the accuracy of previously obtained information (Hook, 1981). The tape recorder was used for recording the details of the focused discussions and interactions. It also served as a back up to the notes from the focused discussion

### **3.7 Limitations of the study**

Not all classes were observed as planned, as the duration of the study coincided with external examinations. Some of the teachers were invigilating

these examinations and were therefore unable to attend classes.

Even though a tape recorder was used as a back up for recorded notes, it was later misplaced before the analysis was undertaken, so the researcher had to rely solely on the handwritten notes. Because three different techniques were used for data collection and as each of these dealt with similar topics, the loss of the taped discussion did not significantly impact on the study.

### **3.8 Analysis**

Data analysis in this study was in several stages. The first stage of analysis was from the classroom observations and it gave first hand information about the actual learner-centred strategies. The analysis of this information produced local and cross-school themes about learner-centred strategies and the implications for teachers and learners. The data collected in this first stage was then combined with the survey questionnaire data to produce refined categories as the second stage.

Following the collection of survey questionnaires the content was analysed in order to identify categories (Tesch 1990) that were relevant to the research. Miles and Huberman (1984) further state that categories of codes can be generated from the researcher's questions or problem areas and/or key concepts considered relevant to the inception of the study. These categories are derived from existing knowledge and new data, but open coding also enabled unexpected information (e.g. about actions or events) and patterns to emerge. This was then used as the basis for the focused discussions. The intention at this stage of the analysis was to take the cross-school themes back to the teachers for verification, refinement and shaping for final analysis.

During the analysis the data from the three collection techniques was classified into categories. These data segments were clustered into categories that set the stage for formulation of theoretical propositions. The researcher then explored possible relationships between these categories (Miles et al. 1984). These relationships were observed in the form of a matrix in order to get a sense of main themes, relationships and overlaps resulting in headings and sub-headings. The categories also emerged from the definition of the learner-centred approach itself, found at the beginning of Chapter 2. Three main

themes emerged from this definition. The first involves a focus on individual learners (their preferences, past experience, acquiring skills); the second identifies and examines learner-centred teaching methods that are effective in learning; the third focuses on the needs of the nation as the constitution and the educational policies in the introduction stated.

After coding and categorising both the learners' and teachers' responses, there were overlapping issues that emerged. These were: common learner-centred teaching strategies; benefits of using different learner-centred strategies; classroom climate; classroom management; lessons that can be learned from learner-centred strategies; skills that can be learned and emphasised in various learner-centred strategies; using learners' past experience and other issues while using learner-centred strategies; and, improvements in language teaching. For language preference from learners and reasons for preference, only learners had observations.

This methodology chapter unfolds the processes taken in the study. These processes generated the data which is translated into findings and discussions in the following chapters.

## Chapter 4: Findings

From analysis of the data collected as outlined in Chapter 3, the following findings emerged. These focus on both learners and teachers. The data provides evidence of how the learner-centred approach is used by teachers and experienced by learners. It also allows us to make suggestions as to possible improvements that could be effected so that the method becomes more widely used within schools in Lesotho.

### 4.1 Learners' perceptions about language preference

This section examines learners' preferences in learning English and Sesotho. For a majority of learners, their preferred language was English and they put forward four reasons for preferring this language. However, learners acknowledged the importance and relevance of each language.

Firstly, learners thought that it was "...interesting and fun to learn" English.

The second reason that learners gave for preferring English was their belief that it was essential for smooth relations and understanding among different language speakers in a wide range of situations. One student put these ideas into words when she said

*...English is foremost a medium of communication as well as a universal language, it is even an international language. Most people use English worldwide in order to read, write and speak amongst first language speakers and those of a non-English speaking background. As a way of communication therefore, one is able to express oneself through English. It is also of benefit in providing people from different areas with a means to relate to each other smoothly.*

Thirdly, learners appreciated that English was essential for learning other subjects. Two students reflected

*...All the subjects are done in English and when we further our studies, we will still require it. Almost everything can be achieved through English as, through knowing it, one can perform well in all*

*studies, as all of them are taught in English except for Sesotho. If teachers integrate other issues into the learning using English, this helps with learning other subjects as well. English is therefore regarded very highly.*

The fourth reason learners preferred English was that the language is considered a possible tool for work and careers. As a result learners indicated that when they performed English well, they thought that they might want to pursue a teaching career. One learner encapsulated this idea by saying

*...We always obtain better marks in English. When we grow up we want to be English teachers in the future as teachers assist us to understand the language and therefore we even prefer it best.*

*...English is an international language; therefore, without English job opportunities are very limited.*

Indicating a different preference, a number of learners said that they favoured Sesotho. These learners associated their preference with their success.

*...We get high marks in Sesotho and so we like it... it is considered easy to learn.*

Others associated their preference with pride in their nationality

*...Sesotho is our mother tongue and is widely spoken in the country, as it is the first language to most of us... and it makes one feel proud of one's nationality.*

#### **4.2 Incorporating past experience in language learning**

Learners addressed the relevance and impact of past experience in learning, including the skills that they acquired from using these previous experiences. Most learners applied previous experiences while learning languages in order to gain new knowledge. All teachers also believed that previous experience was vital in the learning process. Both learners and teachers put forward reasons why they believed past experience was vital in their every-day learning. All the learner respondents stated that they have used previous experience to assist

them in their learning.

Both learners and teachers observed that using past experience helped them to apply existing knowledge to the present situation, and this enriched their learning.

The first benefit was that previous knowledge enabled learners to draw relationships between things and ideas. One learner expressed

*...This earlier knowledge helps to relate the new knowledge to what is already known and the understanding of the concept becomes easier.*

Another learner stated that past knowledge helped them to answer questions correctly when writing tests, and so they could show how much they understood. In that case they were able to draw from what they already knew. Two learners as well as the two teachers, Hope and Lineo, observed

*...It is possible to reach an understanding of new things quickly because of the use of precedent experiences to understand new concepts. In some instances, too, when questions are asked in relation to earlier experience, learners are prompted to revise their understanding so that when they are asked similar questions again, they get them correct*

*...In some cases when the explanation given by the teacher is not adequate, past experience is drawn upon to support understanding*

*...Using past experience makes learners understand new things quickly because they use their past experiences in order to understand new concepts*

*...As students are able to use skills discussed in this activity; they are able to move fast with the syllabus since learners understand most topics with ease as they relate to experiences they already know.*

Past experience enabled learners to help their teachers in giving clearer

descriptions. Busi considered that

*...Some students are more exposed to certain things than teachers so, some students explain certain concepts far better than teachers, and this helps other learners to get a better understanding of what is being explained.*

It was through past experience that learners were able to share ideas and occurrences with their teachers. Lineo and Patience noted that

*...Students are able to apply their knowledge to the present situation as they use their past experience. They discuss their experiences and learn from their peers' experiences as well*

*...As learners use their past experience, they can share their experiences with the class and the teacher, sometimes they can even explain some concepts they have experienced better than the teacher can.*

The other benefit is that previous experience assists learners to understand other subjects too. One learner indicated

*...This past experience is also employed to help learners to understand other subjects better. In some cases when answering questions, only past experience can help to come up with solutions, as some things are not taught at school. Some knowledge underpinning learning at school can only be acquired from home. It is in connecting past experience, home and school that one becomes able to relate current and previous learning and so understand better what the teacher is talking about.*

Other benefits observed by teachers concerned classroom management and syllabus coverage. Even though in some cases learners digressed while earlier experience was used, it was not very often. Lintle and Lerato reflected

*...While using the past experience and other issues, students perform better as they are able to read, write or listen on their own*

*or, through group approaches*

*...Learning goes on faster and the teacher can make a wide coverage of the syllabus.*

Past experiences helped learners to discover and develop particular skills. Both teachers and learners indicated that there was a range of skills necessary in learning languages, and that these can be classified into life skills and communication skills. From questionnaires, observation schedules and focused discussion, teachers and learners knew about the skills even though they did not seem to pay much attention to life skills; and communication skills were usually highly attended to as they were often a syllabus requirement. When previous experience was applied to learning the development of these skills was emphasised.

Most learners thought that they acquired a range of significant life skills from past experience, which they could in turn use in their daily experiences. The skills helped them accept whatever situation they were in. Learners developed both survival and social skills. Several learners and teachers, Lintle and Lerato, indicated the following skills:

*...We learn to respect the audience as well as learning about a range of skills we need to get through life; skills such as trust, caring, independence, responsibility, dignity, caring, openness, decision making, cooperation, honesty, openness, volunteering and assertiveness.*

*...They learn to take everything as it comes and to deal with it accordingly and learn not to be stressed about the future. These skills also assist learners to learn to make their own choices in life, and to learn how people can relate to each other.*

*...Learners are confident in whatever they do. Acting or performing in drama and simulation based on our past experience especially enforces this.*

*...We need to be open when talking to our parents about body changes, and this confidence and communication has taught us to*

*believe in ourselves and to think before doing something. This results in building up confidence and feeling that no one can ever undermine the decision made.*

*...We make own decisions regarding the final answer in a test, counsel each other, find things on their own and teach this new knowledge to others too, be self-supportive, appreciative, and cooperative, and be able to judge the manner in which they approach issues in life.*

*...Develop life skills and learn to trust and assist others to achieve a goal.*

*...Students use their experiences in tackling the issues concerning their class work and solve their other problems easily as they are familiar with such problems.*

All these life skills learners could acquire from using previous knowledge. They were also relevant when dealing with communication skills (the focus of language learning), as they required students to develop relationships, think clearly, and to listen and communicate ideas.

Other than life skills, learners also acquired communication skills that were specified in the syllabus. Using these communication skills together with past experience assisted learners to become creative. Some of these skills assisted learners to formulate individual learning techniques. Several learners represented their reflections as follows:

*...We learn about a range of communication skills, but most emphasis is placed on reading, listening, speaking and writing; we also learn to create own stories and use appropriate vocabulary for specific situations.*

*...Speaking English is vital, as it will assist in writing clearly, expressing ideas openly, and correcting someone who speaks the language incorrectly. This helps to improve speaking, reading and use of appropriate vocabulary.*

*...Using previous experience helps to discover some things as learning takes place. On certain occasions past knowledge is used when writing poems, letters and compositions and in composing drama. When writing about what happened earlier; those experiences help us learn best. There is a correlation in learners' minds between the foundations of learning, the expression of that learning, and the acknowledgement of past experience. This is central in improving their writing ability.*

*...In order to evaluate their understanding and proper uses of language, learners have to show independence as they will even be assessed individually.*

Learners further observed that past experience assisted certain communication skills development. Other skills were concerned with assisting learners to become more inquisitive and research minded in finding necessary information. These skills were similar to life skills too. Several learners reflected that

*...Past experience helps them to develop the life skills of oratory and acting and caring for one another. In this regard they also learn to trust and assist others to achieve their goals. Past experience also helps to improve skills in order to perform well in all the studies. Acknowledging past experience opens up knowledge that might be useful in the future. This makes one open-minded in relating the past to the future. It is through this past experience that one therefore becomes self-confident.*

*...Learners become able to seek information from the group openly and then draw conclusions based on the ideas obtained from the group. Past experience supports and facilitates collaborative learning.*

Another benefit was that past experience was a source of memory. Learners could be wary of earlier occurrences, which they did not want to revisit, as they were painful or disappointing. One learner noted

*...Past experience might therefore act as a reminder to be able to*

*choose from good or bad. One example is that when one learner did not do the homework, failure was the result; however, lately the homework is done on time.*

### **4.3 General perceptions about the learner-centred approach**

Teachers were asked to define the learner-centred approach. In their definitions they also included the benefits of using this approach. They indicated several significant benefits, of which seven were directly concerned with learners' and teachers' roles.

The first benefit noted was the importance of learners being the main focus and having the learner-centred approach directed to them. While using strategies in this approach learners become challenged. Hope and Busi defined this approach as

*...Methods whereby the learning process is centred on the students. Students are given a task; the teacher is just a facilitator in the process.*

*...Methods that are learner-oriented, they indirectly challenge the learner to bring out his or her best. The students dictate in a way what is to be taught.*

As another benefit, one teacher indicated that while working in a learner-centred environment learners research more efficiently with the intention of finding more information. As a result, this inquiry highlighted the impact of the revised curriculum. Patience and Lintle expressed that learner-centred education involves

*...Methods where students investigate, find solutions for themselves, remember and understand things they do by themselves.*

*...Since the reviewed syllabus became in place, learners like to research a lot, they are very inquisitive and like doing things on their own. When they find certain information as they are looking for information, if it is not clear, they ask a lot of questions so that they*

*can get a better understanding.*

Lerato, Thabelo, Lineo and Patience described the learner-centred methods as focusing on engaging learners significantly. This engagement therefore leads to arousing interest in learners. They noted that the methods

*...Involve students more in the learning activity than getting ... information from the teacher.*

*...Allowed students to be actively involved in the lesson.*

*...Are very effective in learning as when well planned, the learners get interested and they fully understand what is being taught.*

*...Involve students from the beginning of the lesson to the end.*

*...Change things so that students do not just listen but they are fully involved in the learning process, most activities are done or carried out by them, it makes it easier to learn.*

Learner-centred methods allowed learners to demonstrate their understanding. Other teachers observed that when learners were actively engaged and participating they developed a deeper understanding which helped them to see the connections in their learning. It therefore became easier for learners to recall what they participated in and this could be connected to the use of previous experience. Both Lintle and Thabelo expressed this when they noted that

*...Learners are free to show their understanding of the topic; they can discuss and practise it.*

*... In some cases learners are even able to observe the overlaps even before the teacher can outline them.*

*...At their age, learners play as at the same time learn and what they are actually involved in doing becomes more memorable.*

Consequently, learners understood better and therefore were able to share information in learning language content. Hope stated that, “students share

ideas as they present and ask questions in the use of learner-centred approach”.

Learner-centred strategies allowed learners to demonstrate their understanding. Lintle expressed this idea

*...Learners are free to show their understanding of the topic, and they can discuss and practice it.*

Most learners expressed that learner-centred methods required them to take responsibility of their own learning and therefore become self-motivated. One learner observed

*...That time spent on study time is increased. One learner who used to study for 2 hours had lately increased the study time to 5 hours instead.*

Another benefit was the way in which learner-centred teaching methods helped students to learn in various ways. Lerato observed that learners were better or more able to build relations with others and that their dependence was on their peers rather than on their teacher when learner-centred strategies were used. She suggested that

*...Students learn more from others, as through using the strategies students are more on their own than on the teacher.*

Using the learner-centred approach also enabled teachers to transmit significant content while employing various strategies. Hope also observed that

*Some topics require a number of strategies while some can be dealt with using fewer strategies. It also depends on the complexity of the topic or content to be covered, and on how many of these strategies can be used in a lesson.*

Teachers perceived that through the use of the learner-centred approach there was a shift from formal to informal learning. In the formal learning teachers were in control and learners were restricted, while in informal learning the teacher provided guidance and learners were free to obtain learning from other sources

rather than the teacher only. These learner-centred methods enabled learning rather than restricting it. Lineo observed that

*...The methods make learning less troublesome and more of a natural situation than a formal one which has a lot of restrictions.*

As learner-centred approach was used, the shift in the teachers' roles was observed. Hope, Lintle and Lerato observed that when learners were actively engaged in the process of learning, the role of the teacher changed. They described this change in the teacher's role in several ways. These were:

*...From provider of information to facilitator.*

*...Students are more on their own than on the teacher.*

*...They need the teacher to be near in order to offer assistance if needed.*

In regard to the proposals for improvement in future language learning and teaching, a suggestion concerning teaching strategies was outlined by both learners and teachers, who strongly recommended a number of significant changes. These changes were suggested in order to improve learner-centred teaching methods so that learners could display their creativity. Learners proposed certain teaching modes and styles that teachers could use. A significant number of learners, together with these teachers, Patience, Hope, Lerato, Lineo and Lintle, observed the following:

*...More learner-centred strategies have to be employed by teachers and examination-centred approaches to be less emphasised by schools as this inhibits the natural learning approach.*

*...Different learner-centred methods of teaching have to be used so that learners may be able to choose the ones they are comfortable with.*

*...Teachers have to ask questions where necessary in class and as they deliver they should try to give a lot of examples so that learning can be easier. Also teachers have to use those questions that will*

*require students to think critically in each and every lesson. All teachers should try to practise all teaching methods in the questionnaires as they all have different skills to offer to learners and can enable independent learning.*

*...To be given a test whenever a topic is finished so as to monitor our understanding and knowledge on the topic we have been dealing with.*

*...Limit on the examinations so that they are held sessional not quarterly like is the practice currently.*

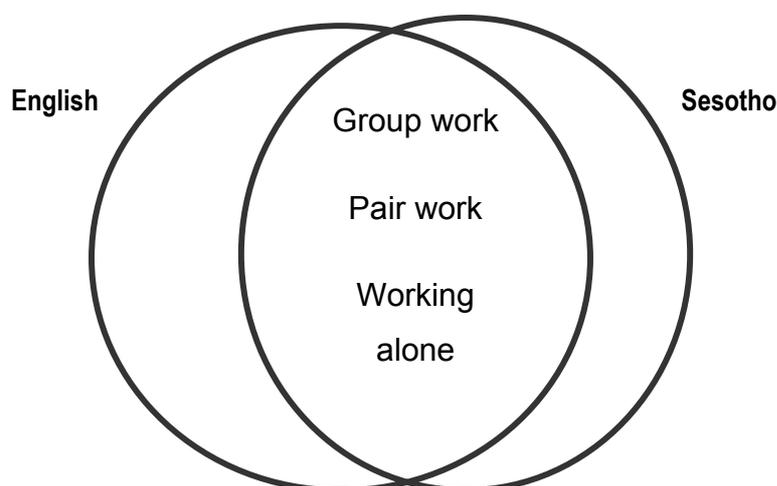
These findings lead to a discussion of perceptions in connection to a variety of learner-centred strategies that can be used in language teaching and learning.

#### **4.4 Perceptions about particular learner-centred strategies**

In this section findings about particular learner-centred strategies employed in Lesotho while learning and teaching English and Sesotho will be discussed. From the three data collection techniques used, that is questionnaires, observation schedules and focused discussion, teachers and learners participating in this study used or experienced these strategies and considered them to be both learner-centred and best practice.

The data gathered in this study indicated that teachers who adopted a learner-centred approach to teaching used a range of strategies. These strategies can be categorised into those methods that can be used as instructional tools and others that can be used to organise students and to support them in developing relationships. Teachers also indicated how they managed to control the students as they used the learner-centred methods, in order for effective learning to take place.

Learners in all year levels noted that in both languages, similar teaching strategies were employed. When asked which methods helped them learn best, they gave reasons for considering certain methods to be the best approaches. The following figure shows the methods that learners believed were learner-centred for each language subject.



*Figure 4-Learner-centred strategies identified by learners in the two languages-  
Sesotho and English.*

#### **4.5 Organisational strategies and learning relationships**

This section will focus on the relationships needed or involved as learners work together or individually. This is the way that teachers can organise the students so that they learn and master their relationships collectively and/or individually. Emerging from this organisation is the requirement that students develop certain learning relationships while at the same time learning languages. This is connected to the above figure where learners noted that these are the methods that assisted them to learn best in both languages.

In the classrooms observed, most learners worked together in pairs, groups or individually. It is inevitable in this section that all learner-centred strategies used in teaching suggested that learners had to apply certain skills, which fostered relations in working together, either as a team or a group. This section will then explore these skills and how to build on these relations.

Learners proposed a general improvement to all organisational strategies. They suggested

*...We have to be shown the importance of working alone and in pairs or groups other than depending on teachers, as not always do we need teachers, but to be on our own either as a group or individually.*

#### 4.5.1 Working together: group work or pair work

The central theme here is that of working together. In this regard, two approaches were put together since they revolve around the same idea - that of learners working together. This can be working in groups or in pairs. It has to be acknowledged also that there were cases where the learner would have to work individually either before joining the group or after the group discussion. That is why working alone is to be addressed and it is recognised that in both situations there were skills peculiar to each circumstance.

Teachers and learners indicated the frequency of the use of group work and pair work as a strategy for working together. The frequency ranges at most from every day to at least once a month. This highlighted that this organisational activity is frequently used, particularly in some schools.

Both learners and teachers who participated in this study indicated that it was vital that learners worked together as pairs or in a group, and that it was particularly relevant in current times as people strive for cooperation rather than competition. Both participating groups outlined several advantages in working together. The benefits they identified were intrinsically connected, so that while dealing with one, others were also underlying.

Firstly, both learners and teachers believed that working together enabled learners to assist each other in building understanding. Patience, Lineo and one learner observed that

*...Students are able to help each other where they do not understand and when working in pairs everybody is able to share ideas about what they understand best.*

*...Helping others to understand is very beneficial as the more the task is explained and discussed by different people, the clearer it becomes and therefore is easily understood.*

*...Learners show understanding, are optimistic, and are experimental as well as able to take risks.*

Several learners also explained that working together enabled them to impart

information to others and as a result their knowledge was enhanced. This sharing enabled them to enquire for additional information in order to improve their learning and to gather new ideas in an interesting manner. Four learners expressed the following reasons:

*...When discussing, sharing ideas and opinions and revising with classmates, we get to know things which were not known to us before... group members discuss the matter until they get the solution and they share experiences on how to deal with problems and show their character as well. Other group members may give information that I do not know, and then when working as a group we help each other.*

*...To gather and get new ideas and different opinions from others, there is also learning how to interact with others in a group and pair work and this results in getting more information from others. In this regard learners manage to share and solve problems easily because of the different opinions and information collected from all group members. This is another way of improving English in groups when ideas are shared as it is ensured that all group members say something in order to show that they understand what is being done.*

*...One learns different ideas from others, which help in building relations so that members become open and ready to learn. As one works together with group members or a pair, one becomes able to gather ideas from different people and use them altogether when learning, since many people come up with different ideas. Ideas are shared, thinking capacity is improved and the minds are challenged. Learners learn how to work together with other people as well as being trustworthy and working together assists to help other members to feel free in a group and as a result to be active and polite to each other.*

*...They agree about what they are working on, they also help one to arrive to good decisions, as the group has to make a discussion*

*before coming to an agreement. This becomes fun because when discussing and making decisions together, the members are also helping each other by sharing ideas and discussing them and where possible gather new learning ideas from each member of the group.*

Teachers also observed that when learners worked together, teachers got to know the depth of how much and what they knew so that learners could be assisted to acquire new knowledge from group members. Lintle expressed that

*...Working together helps the teacher to discover how much knowledge the students have acquired previously so that he knows where to take off from.*

As part of the discussion around benefits, teachers observed that when they organised their classes using group and pair work, it helped them to achieve syllabus coverage. Learners were at liberty to interact with others and consequently varying learning opportunities arose. Lintle observed that

*...Group members are free to work together as when doing so, every body becomes free to ask questions when necessary.*

Another advantage of working together was that the learners' mode of learning changed. Lineo indicated that

*...Students learn best from each other so the teacher only fills up gaps, as students are able to follow the instructions and cover only what is essential.*

Another benefit of working together lies in developing certain skills. Both learners and teachers outlined the skills emphasised in working together through pair and group work as: cooperation, openness, decision-making, respect, courtesy, communication and critical thinking. Additional skills included learning to lead meetings, jotting points in a note form, patience, being disciplined and orderly, learning to accommodate others' views, honesty, assertiveness, self-awareness, listening, tolerance and leadership skills.

By arranging learners in pairs or in groups learners were enabled to enhance and develop a range of skills. These skills included communication and life

skills. The development of such skills also assisted teachers to deal with the syllabus content and wider coverage. Lerato noted

*...Group discussions that follow on a debate bring up another debate in the group. This covers the argumentative essays, which are a requirement in the syllabus, and in doing this a lot of communication and life skills are used.*

Also talking about skills development, two learners observed that there was a need for assistance and cooperation among group members:

*...As students work together, they show love, care and trust for one another. This requires them to be generous and cooperative in different ways. If one has a different point of view, we have to debate on the point so as to come to a correct conclusion because one is always not right. As this is being done, learning to listen to other people's opinions and views is enhanced.*

*...They work hand in hand, helping each other to understand and learn. It is in this approach that members are not scared of one another therefore there is cooperation within the group as members bring up ideas and opinions.*

In working together learners developed skills which they did not previously possess. Such skills included the ability to rationalise. One learner puts this idea into words by saying they

*...Gain those new skills, which were not possessed at first. This then enables us to access different perceptions including logic from other students.*

While working together in groups or in pairs, learners managed to develop problem-solving skills. One learner reflected that they developed

*...The ability to help each other in learning as there is another person who helps in solving problems one may not have solved individually. Through doing this, one is helped to understand the problem, learn how to interact with others and this gives one a*

*chance to learn with colleagues.*

Other than using problem-solving skills, learners also practised social skills, such as interpersonal skills, while relating to each other. One learner observed that while group members work together

*...Each member has different ideas for solving a problem and the group have to take all their ideas into consideration before making a decision. That is why in a group, members have to listen to each others' opinion, be open to each other and this brings forth a range of skills including; love, care, trust for one another and being generous in different ways.*

Two learners observed that the development of certain skills urged them to participate a lot. They noted that

*...Group members are not shy to ask questions where they do not understand as this helps them on how to answer appropriately and to be sure of what is being done. It is by doing this that members display participation and as a result group members are interdependent on one another as they have to cooperate, to be open and to think before making decisions.*

Then, as these skills are used, Busi indicated that greater syllabus coverage was possible. She noted

*...Many topics can be covered within a short time as each group is given a topic to work on and then have to give feedback to the whole class.*

Teachers made suggestions about improving the teaching and learning of languages and using group or pair work to ensure that learners managed to work cooperatively. Busi proposed that it was important

*...To establish English and Sesotho projects like competitions, fairs and inter visits with other schools for debate so that they emphasise learning as a group and then can even build self-confidence,*

*assertiveness in their students.*

The next category is that of working alone, another mode in which learners can be organised so that they can learn language.

#### **4.5.2 Working alone**

Even though the learner-centred strategies were mostly concerned with working together, there was a time when learners felt they were best to work individually. It was considered beneficial that learners build certain skills that were essential for working individually, as they would not always be in a group.

Learners and teachers who participated in this study outlined the benefits and values of working alone in their responses to the questionnaires, focused discussion and classroom observation. They thought that even when using learner-centred strategies, with the active involvement of learners, there were cases when learners had to work individually. Learners indicated that they worked alone every day and the teachers also supported their observation.

Both learners and teachers acknowledged the fact that at some stage in the lesson, learners could be left to work alone while internalising what they had acquired from their respective groups or partners. While reflecting, they might be able to observe if they missed some information and whether they needed additional information or not.

Teachers acknowledged that they let students work alone every-day and they managed to control them as they were working. Teachers expressed that this strategy is considered important in helping to address quite a number of issues that are syllabus requirements.

It is necessary to mention that working alone requires particular skill development. On the issue of skills learned from working alone, learners and teachers indicated that decision-making, being self-reliant, self-assurance, self confidence, being self-contained, self-trusting, assertiveness, boldness, self-esteem, self-determination and independence were all important and identifiable. The following were considered to be additional skills developed when learners work alone: self-expression, reading as well as writing skills, learning to be independent-minded and taking responsibility for one's own

actions. The skills could be used to achieve and learn about the content, and hence enabled language learning.

Learners expressed that they managed to concentrate on what was being taught. One learner noted

*...We are able to concentrate on what we are doing and in some cases this helps us in getting things correct.*

It is in working alone that learners acquired the skill of making their own decisions. This becomes very apparent when they are being tested and then have to make decisions on which answers to present. Several learners together with a teacher, Lerato, reflected that

*...When working alone, one works hard so that one can be best, sometimes one has to make decisions for him/herself and when one cannot see a way out, that is only when one can turn to other people for advice.*

*...Students are able to work on their own like in the tests including in the examinations.*

*...Students take part when discussions are held in class, then after students are allowed to read or write individually. This also helps them as they may also be required to write answers individually as examinations will be written individually.*

*...This leads to the capacity of being able to implement decision-making skills when solving problems individually without assistance.*

Another relevant skill which learners developed through working alone was being independent. Both teachers and learners indicated this. Busi, Patience and two learners observed that working alone developed independence skills and ability. They observed that

*...Students are prepared to be self-dependent especially towards their academic duties.*

*...Helps in teaching learners to be independent.*

*...Learners are independent in expressing their ideas together with timing their ability as one has to trust oneself when making decisions.*

*...Learners work with 100% concentration as this helps to be independent so that they can come up with all the solutions as they do not have to depend on somebody else to solve problems.*

Individual problem-solving skills were also enhanced through working alone. Hence, learners gauged their strengths and shortcomings. Two learners expressed that

*...Ability to solve problems without needing assistance is required and this helps one to be aware of one's individuality as it makes one able to determine weaknesses that need to be attended to.*

*...Apart from trusting oneself, one has to be confident and courageous enough to confront teachers when one meets some difficulties. This will help one to observe the weaknesses and strengths and as a result work on improving them and thinking deeply and giving sound reasons when answering. It is through working alone that one learns how to tackle a difficulty or a problem on one's own, also to tackle difficult situations that one comes across as learning takes place.*

Self-confidence was another skill which learners acquired as they worked alone. Patience and two learners reflected that working alone helped learners

*...To read with understanding and write in confidence what they have discussed in class.*

*...To have self-confidence since most people who do not trust themselves always fail as they depend on other people as they take whatever they say even if it is not correct or reasonable.*

*...As an individual, one has to work hard so that one can know*

*where one has problems and sometimes this leads to being accurate when working alone than working with other people and this requires self- confidence.*

In some cases learners reflected on their way of handling things so that they could change if necessary. One learner expressed that

*...One can do much without being supported and as one recognises own weaknesses it is possible to try to work on them.*

As a result of using these skills and reflecting, students sometimes needed to work alone in order to acknowledge their level of understanding in a certain topic. If the level was low they required motivation to improve and Lineo noticed that some learners

*...Are able to motivate themselves individually as they work alone, even at home when they are doing things by themselves.*

Learners indicated that they were expected to use a range of skills so that they could manage to work individually. One learner reflected that they needed

*...To work hard and apply a range of skills in order to pass or to succeed. As a result, critical thinking, open-mindedness, caring, self-trusting, self-awareness, concentration, decision-making and confidence are required to work alone in order to find out things and this leads to managing to get answers correct during examinations.*

It was possible for teachers to weigh the extent of knowledge their learners had when they worked alone. Lineo made an observation that when dealing with certain topics it becomes easy for the teacher to detect the strengths and weaknesses of learners. Hope also observed that working alone assisted in lesson planning as teachers have information about learners' individual needs. Both outlined that

*...In comprehension, one can see how students deal with questions and the summary writing so that one could help them if there is need.*

...The teacher finds easily which students can learn faster as well as which ones are slow learners, and then in the lessons' preparation, the teacher caters for both students' abilities.

#### 4.6 Instructional strategies for learning.

The next section will focus on the learner-centred strategies that teachers used to promote engagement and involvement in language classrooms in Lesotho. When both learners and teachers were asked to mention the methods they used most frequently, they gave these responses. Further to the strategies shown in figure 5 in this chapter, the following diagram illustrates additional learner-centred methods. Teachers identified some methods that they said they used frequently and learners also mentioned the same methods.

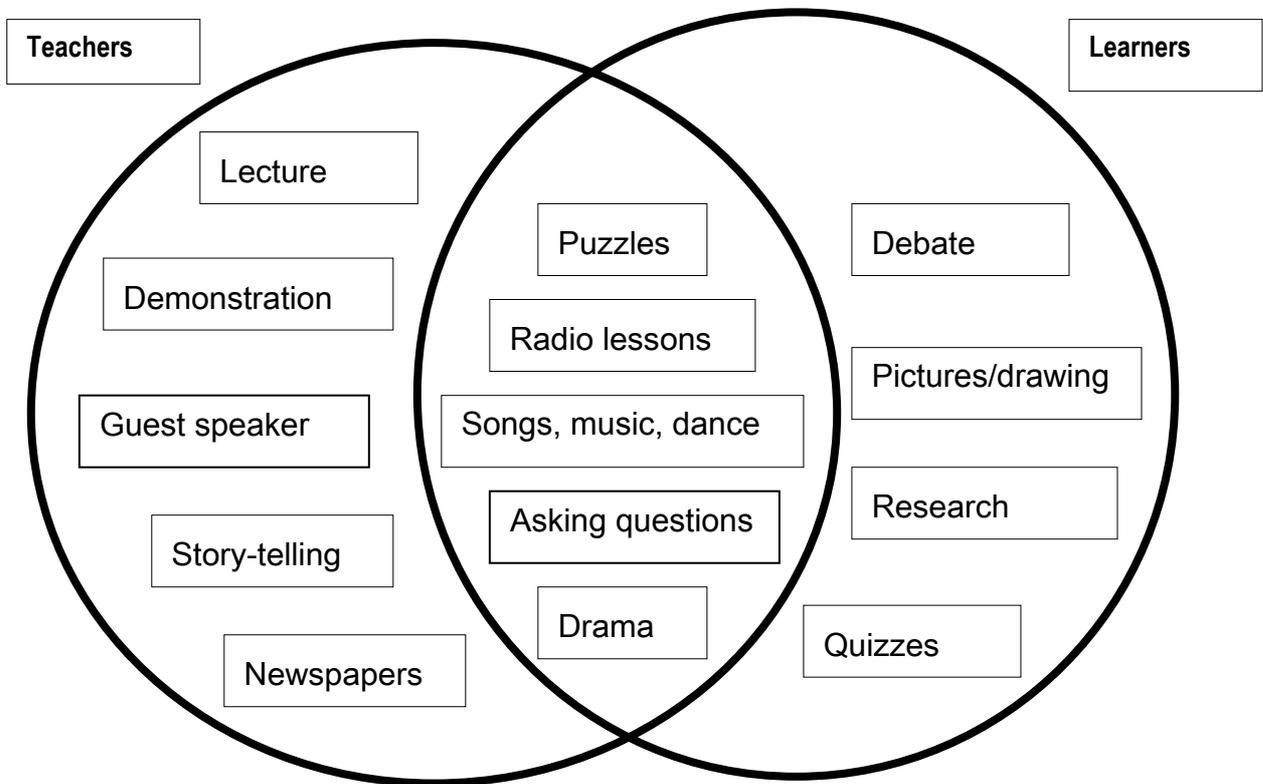


Figure 5: Learner-centred strategies identified by teachers and learners

Learner-centred strategies that required learners' engagement included: using drama and role-play; using music, songs and dances; using games; and using pictures and drawings in learning. The findings will address the benefits of using the strategies. The first learner-centred strategy is using drama and role-play to

learn languages.

#### **4.6.1 Using drama and role-play**

This is an activity where students work together to produce or act a meaningful drama. In the context of this study, teachers highlighted the use of certain passages in texts that can be dramatised or role-played. Scenes might be read aloud, or drama and role-play might be used to enhance the comprehension of a passage, a novel, a short story or a poem. Learners acted this out to show how much they understood as they were reading. Learners also wrote dramas themselves concerning different social issues. These were also acted out. Sometimes the teacher chose an existing role-play or drama that was related to the content that s/he was dealing with.

When asked how frequently this activity was used, the responses from the questionnaires indicated that a small number of learners and teachers used drama and role-play as often as possible. Compared to drama, role-play was used more often as it does not take as long to prepare. However the frequency of their use varied. Most learners stated that they never used drama in their learning. Others indicated that they used it once a month, or, in some cases, once a session. Teachers also supported these statements claiming that they mostly used drama or role-play once a month.

Students tend to enjoy role-playing or dramatising their own set books, particularly where significant themes are unresolved, such as when someone is sick with HIV/AIDS or a sex-related illness. They liked role-playing the characters from the passages they read, role-playing certain characters in their literature books, imitating grown ups such as lovers and teachers, as well as those that they have not seen or heard before. Students in both levels and both languages who took part in role-play said they have acted as a main character from one of their literature texts. They have also been a narrator, actress or actor.

Both learners and teachers acknowledged the relevance of using drama or role-play as a learner-centred method of learning languages. By taking part in drama or role-play, or by being a part of the audience, students were exposed to possible solutions to problems and they shared experiences on how to deal with

problems. Also, when asked about managing to control their class when this activity of drama and role-play was used, teachers were confident of their classroom management. Teachers considered syllabus coverage and classroom management as another benefit in using drama and role-play for language content learning.

Learners learned how to display aspects of characters, their feelings, and to read certain behaviours in others through the use of language. This compelled learners to interact extensively and they reported that they had a lot of fun. Busi, a teacher, indicated that

*...This is clearly observed when learners take part in role-playing what they read in comprehension passages or literature texts; they try to portray the feelings indicated in them; they make whatever has been read alive and real.*

When learning languages, learners were required to use several activities to assist them to improve their spoken language so as to be able to remember what they had learned. Two of the learners noted that they

*...Have a good memory of the drama, speak English in a good way, and read one's lines fast like first language speakers.*

Being engaged in drama and role-play created fun and interest for learners and as a result they gained knowledge, and this addressed some of the syllabus expectations. Lineo and Busi observed that

*...Most of the dramas are interesting to students.*

*...Sometimes students are not familiar with certain lifestyles so from being engaged in dramas or role-plays they gain a lot of knowledge and information. ...As students dramatise or role-play, they get more insight into the story they are reading.*

As learners used drama or role-play, they gained content and knowledge specified in the syllabus. Lintle and Lerato noted that

*...Most dramas embody effective proverbs and idiomatic*

*expressions and well-selected figures of speech, which are the requirements from the syllabus.*

*...Students are able to abide by the rules and race against time as they write assignments or tests.*

In support of the above observation, teachers indicated that by using drama or role-play certain literature texts and concepts were taught easily. This assisted learners to put into practice what they had read in literature texts and so connect their learning to life situations. Lineo and Patience shared the same observation that

*...Certain activities in English literature are more practical than theoretical so acting them on stage makes them much easier than just teaching them in class.*

*...When dealing with one short story, students are able to debate different messages from the story. These themes help them in actual and proper life skills needed in life. When they dramatise a short story they understand it better.*

Drama or role-play had significant messages and lessons that were valuable for use in daily life. Some of these lessons were in relation to expectations from the society about pre-marital sex, and the choice and quality of friends. Several learners and their teacher, Lerato, observed that they were able to

*...Improve the standard of living and avoid the use of drugs at and out of school.*

*...Respect each other; avoid engaging in sex before marriage, concentrating on being educated than being married, to keep at arm's length from all the people who influence them to disobey their parents.*

*...Be aware that at times the best friend becomes the worst enemy and usually friends never give the favourable advice.*

*...Observe that people are extending the hand of friendship to those*

*who are in need as a way of showing care and understanding.*

Developing knowledge about cultural heritage was another benefit that emerged from the use of drama and role-play. Some of the role-plays and dramas were not only entertaining but also contained significant cultural knowledge, which learners needed to know. Through these dramas and role-plays, learners gained knowledge about their culture and how best to preserve that culture. One learner reflected that they should, “not loose (sic) their culture because of other people’s culture.”

Another benefit concerned awareness about gender and social equity in learners’ lives. One learner expressed that they have learned that it was appropriate to, “do similar jobs for both females and males.”

Skills development formed another benefit. Both teachers and learners observed and experienced the use of the following skills in drama or role-play. The skills emphasised here were mostly listed in the questionnaires: cooperation, trust, caring, openness and decision-making. Other skills which were not listed were also mentioned. Overall, self-awareness, love, and learning to shift roles as a result of seeing the realities of life were considered to be of high relevance to this activity.

The following were additional skills that could be gained from drama or role-play as indicated by both teachers and learners: creativity, orderliness, acting skills, time-consciousness, respect, tolerance, perception, assertiveness, empathy, self-awareness, honesty and critical thinking. Even though this was the case, there were some students who thought that there were no skills learned from this activity.

When using drama or role-play, a significant number of skills were addressed. Some of the skills were life skills related to health issues. Some of the skills were social skills, which assisted people in their relationships. Others were problem-solving skills and individual learning skills. Several learners observed that in addressing these skills, students have to

*...Be open about life issues such as HIV/AIDS.*

*...Develop a sense of empathy and, perhaps tolerance.*

*...Express the feelings of the character one acted, concentrate on what one is doing, be courageous enough to face the audience, take one's responsibility seriously especially motherhood, make good decisions when doing things and be able to speculate.*

Teachers observed similar skills that drama and role-play helped learners to develop. Lintle, Hope and Patience observed that the qualities of empathy and confidence were significant when using drama and role-play, and that learners acquired them. They expressed the belief that

*...Themes such as love, trust, decision-making, cooperation, and openness are learned.*

*...Dramas instruct the audience on how to solve their problems.*

*...To appreciate others' views and to do things in order according to the given time and topic, this depends on the topic or passage they read. This is to do with time management, intellectual discipline, tolerance and empathy.*

When asked what future improvements can be effected in the use of drama and role-play, both learners and teachers suggested certain proposals. Busi and one learner suggested that

*...To improve the teaching, there must be time for language and literature and drama should not be done separately.*

*...Drama and music are to be used so as to make learning more creative and fun as they are common forms of entertainment, and learners find them most appealing.*

#### **4.6.2 Using music, songs and dances**

Another instructional teaching tool in a learner-centred classroom is the use of music or songs and dances. The current practice in the schools that participated in this study indicated that they used this learner-centred strategy. From the data collected, teachers used songs, music and dances from once a week to

once a session.

Learners began by suggesting that using music or songs made learning enjoyable and at the same time provided an inspiration. One learner observed that

*...Songs make learning easier, music helps one to enjoy learning things; songs motivate one in class as well as help one to think.*

Learners further considered music as an effective reminder. By assisting learners to recall some of the things that have been previously learned, new information can be built onto existing knowledge. One learner encapsulated the ideas of many by saying

*...Songs help us to remember what we learned, as songs are not easily forgotten, are full of messages, and are interesting too.*

Both teachers and students enjoyed a wide range of music and songs that had messages and lessons which unfolded as the song progressed. One of the lessons concerned instilling moral awareness of certain issues in learners. Busi, Patience and one learner considered that

*...In music and songs, words are chosen wisely to harmoniously get the message across and feel for those mentioned in the songs.*

*...Students learn to interpret the message contained in a song.*

*...Learners learn of issues such as HIV/AIDS, and the harmful effects of smoking.*

Sometimes songs addressed specific content required by the syllabus; therefore, songs assisted learners in language content learning. The use of songs and music in the classroom exposed learners to traditional songs, especially in Sesotho classes, where students learned the song and dance, how and why it was performed and were then able to compose new songs. Teachers managed to control learners and they believed that this assisted them in syllabus coverage. One learner, as well as Lintle, Busi and Patience observed that:

*...The songs that students enjoy most are the latest DJ's or old songs that have something to do with some topics they study.*

*...In some cases songs related to the folktales specifically, songs that deal with grammatical issues in them are sung even not at the appropriate class time. In some cases learners just sing the song to show the teacher how much they understood the previous topic, this leads to composition of a new song, which is related to the content or topic being discussed.*

*...Songs help them in composing songs and poems in relation to a particular issue or content.*

*...Songs always have a message such as idioms; proverbs, figures of speech and all these are the requirements from the syllabus.*

*...Whatever the theme the teacher wants to cover in either language or literature, can be done through music and songs, as suggested in the syllabus. This makes learning fun to students as when they sing they revise or learn language or literature content and aspects.*

*...The teacher can organise some songs with the idiomatic expressions, then discussions are held at the class level, where the teacher gears answers towards solutions, this helps students to be able to choose words appropriately probably when they write the compositions and letters.*

Another purpose that songs served was that of addressing morality and spirituality. Lerato observed that

*...Sometimes students liked songs, which are familiar with their activities at their age; these can be spiritual songs or gospel and hymns.*

Because songs and music provided numerous messages and lessons, learners were assisted by music, both in language learning and in learning specific

content. Two learners noted that they learned how to

*...Express themselves, memorise songs which leads to memorising poems as well, grasp the meaning from a song which will also help them grasp meanings as they are learning.*

Another benefit of using music and songs was skill development. Most teachers felt that all the skills listed in the questionnaires (cooperation, trust, caring, openness and decision-making) were practised in the use of songs. Learners indicated that caring, cooperation, openness, decision-making, open-mindedness, singing, ability to grasp meaning, trust, friendship and faith were also of high relevance. The additional skills mentioned by the learners were: feelings such as sympathy and empathy, openness, assertiveness, honesty and composing.

Music helped learners to display certain skills. Being creative and thinking critically were the demonstrated skills. One learner noted that they were

*...Able to compose songs and tunes easily.*

Providing an opportunity with music at school supported the social role of music within the learners' community. One learner put this idea into words by saying that

*...Songs and music are a form of communication. Moreover, through this activity the class becomes interesting.*

When asked to provide suggestions in regard to improving language teaching, learners put forward general suggestions. They observed that music and songs assisted them in learning a wide range of skills and content. One learner suggested that they have to "learn music and other fun things."

#### **4.6.3 Using games in learning**

Games were another strategy through which learners could be actively engaged in the learning of language. The term 'game' was used broadly here, as teachers and learners in Lesotho used it to include puzzles, debates and poetry activities that might not always be considered as 'games'.

The current practice in the schools that participated in the study was to use games in the learning and teaching of both English and Sesotho. There are some games that are specific to each language, but in some cases the languages shared the same games. From the survey questionnaires, classroom observation and focused discussion, it was apparent that teachers and learners who participated in this study believed there was benefit in having and using games as a learner-centred strategy in the teaching and learning of language.

Learners had differing perceptions as to how often the games were used. Of those students who liked English best, there was a significant group that said they never used or experienced games, while the next largest group claimed to use them once a week. A third and smaller group used games once a month, and the smallest group used them once a session. For those who liked Sesotho best, games were most frequently used either once a week or once a session. Teachers recorded their practice of using games as between once a week and once a month.

The common games used in Sesotho were listed by learners and teachers as: traditional games, drama, puzzles, riddles, songs, debates, ball games and poems; while for English, the most common were puzzles, acting and drama, word searches, debates, charades, riddles, poems, Wendy's house, and songs. The following figure summarises the above information.

Sesotho	Both Sesotho and English	English
Traditional games	Puzzles	Scrabble
Ball games	Acting/drama	Word searches
	Poems	Charades
	Debates	
	Riddles	
	Songs	
	Wendy's house	

*Figure 6: Games used in learning languages*

Teachers observed that learners were interested; that is why they took part in the games. This resulted in the pleasure of language learning. Lerato observed that

*...Students seem to enjoy the games most especially on folklores, something familiar with the topic being learned, role-playing some poems, dramatising comprehension passages and using Wendy's house especially in Sesotho.*

Using games in learning helped learners to learn the game in question and hence they were enabled to show creativity. Busi noted

*...Where games are involved learners play and at the same time learn the game, the vocabulary or the jargon for a particular game. This leads to even being creative as they can compose new games suitable for their era or games suitable for the content they are working on. They also compose new puzzles that cover the topic*

*they have dealt with.*

Most teachers indicated that the use of games helped in addressing various content from the syllabus. Lintle, Patience, Lerato and one learner indicated that

*...As in dealing with poetry, recitation helps students to understand better. Students actually speak and listen; they also read and write thoughtfully which helps a lot in English.*

*...When dealing with one short story, students are able to debate on different messages from the story. These themes help them develop actual life skills and when they dramatize a short story they understand it better.*

*...Some of the topics are interrelated so when doing one topic as they play games, the game may touch on another topic in the syllabus.*

*...In puzzles, knowledge, skills and intelligence are tested, general knowledge and how to communicate with other learners is also gained.*

Teachers also observed that participating in games could enhance knowledge as learners could apply it immediately. Learners could discover other ways of learning than considering the teacher as the source most of the time. Lintle and Thabelo noted that

*...What is learned is applicable in the learners' daily activities including their performance academically.*

*...Learning is not always through formal setting and the teacher but rather natural in a game setting.*

Another benefit of using games was that learners acquired and developed certain skills. According to the learners, the following skills were emphasised and learned from games: cooperation, openness, decision-making, caring, trust, confidence and self-respect. Of the mentioned skills, learners noted that cooperation, decision-making, openness; caring, trust and self-respect were

also used in daily life.

Most teachers felt that all the skills that were listed in the questionnaires (cooperation, trust, caring, openness, decision-making and others) were present in games. These additional skills were also developed through games: confidence, holding arguments in debates, awareness, faithfulness, being supportive, developing different talents and physical abilities, honesty, self-awareness and assertiveness.

Out of a range of skills that can be used, learners were required to apply social skills that assisted them to adhere to certain rules and requirements. Learners also expressed that games assisted them in building skills that enabled them to make informed decisions and cooperate with one another. Patience, Lerato and several learners articulated this saying that

*...Since games have rules to follow, students are conscientized on certain laws in games as well as in life too. This guides learners that in life, rules have to be followed and once broken there will be a penalty given.*

*...Not isolating oneself from others as there will be no cooperation, one must not be selfish as this shows lack of decision-making, one has to be confident before the audience and to make own decisions.*

*...Games enable faster thinking and that cooperation is the main key, as one cannot play a game alone, even if one becomes a player but there are observers to help in the process of the game. One has to be open and this will help a lot in taking decisions easily because an agreement would be reached following a discussion.*

*...Learners manage to learn to be realistic about life, to make decisions as well as being self-confident.*

*...To cooperate with other people and to care for them.*

*...Games let one cooperate and play with confidence and even*

*become friendly with other participants.*

Puzzles were considered as part of games and through using them certain skills were acquired. One learner observed

*...Knowledge, skills and intelligence are tested. Learners believe that it is fun to be engaged in a puzzle, as one has to apply critical thinking, decision-making skills which are a necessity in life.*

Both learners and teachers reflected that games help to increase the learners' levels of observation and knowledge. Therefore students experienced an appreciation of their cultural heritage through exposure to games. They learned about the games that their ancestors used, the skills embodied in those games and other cultural aspects. Several learners and Busi expressed the view that games helped them to learn

*...How to behave and how life was in the past.*

*...Games played by our grand parents are interesting, we still have to learn them as well as play them and teachers have to assist us to play them as games are fun to learn with and they are even very educative.*

*...The Basotho tradition and also learn more about cultural games and some traditional dances.*

*...To be more aware about one's own culture.*

*...To respect other students' decisions.*

*...To cooperate with others.*

When asked to suggest improvements that could be made in the teaching and learning of languages, learners demonstrated an acute awareness of the requirements of their educational system and of the strategies which helped them attain these requirements. Two learners, Busi and Lintle noted that

*...Teachers have to consider using learner-centred methods a lot, especially to use games frequently as they help them to achieve the*

*syllabus coverage.*

*...Things are not to be done theoretically only but as well as practically, e.g. Sesotho games.*

*...Games have to be used more often as they help students to learn happily.*

*...Debates have to be conducted not in one class only but in different classes in the same school or as inter-school events.*

#### **4.6.4 Using pictures and drawings**

Another instructional tool in a learner-centred classroom is the use of pictures and drawings. From the findings in this study, the schools that participated in this research indicated that they used pictures and drawings as another strategy to enhance language learning. Therefore, this section will explore how visuals such as pictures and drawings were used, and what teachers and learners thought of using this tool in an engaging manner, not only to enhance learners' involvement and learning language, but also to understand and gain knowledge. In this study the use of pictures and drawings will be discussed in relation to the benefits it offers and suggestions for further improvement.

Both teachers and learners noted that pictures enable learning. The frequency of the use of pictures and drawings ranged from once a week to once a session. This indicated that the strategy is frequently used.

The first benefit of using pictures was to enhance understanding even though in some cases the pictures did not serve the purpose. Using pictures in this manner helped teachers to cover the syllabus. As pictures provided meaningful messages, they helped learners to understand better. Hope, Patience, Busi and one learner reflected

*...Pictures and drawings help students to have a better understanding, as students are able to find things for themselves. Drawings help them a lot in understanding literature.*

*...Pictures and drawings help in forming own picture and*

*impressions of what is learned, this calls for better understanding.*

*...Students sometimes laugh at the pictures drawn by the teacher since the teacher is not good at drawing; this sometimes results in students not discussing what is intended.*

*...A picture can depict meaning and this helps learners to understand better as pictures can have different messages to different people therefore they also help in the formulating of new ideas.*

Lerato further expressed that various visuals that made language lessons interesting were used. She noted that

*...Drawings and pictures that students enjoy most are the ones that they draw out or make themselves, pictures showing different items on the environment, cartoons dealing with current issues they know, from the government, schools or somewhere else.*

Pictures also provided certain useful lessons. Learners observed that it was through pictures that they learned about vital issues that were part of their social values. Teachers supported this by indicating that the teaching of values can be addressed through pictures. One learner and Busi indicated

*...Violence is never an answer to any problem. Accuracy including caring are the most important things in life.*

*...Pictures always show some emotional feeling and how much people may be considerate.*

While using pictures and drawings to enhance their learning, learners could draw pictures that depicted the meaning and helped them to conceptualise what they had read. Patience reflected that learners

*...Make drawings of the characters' impression after reading about them in literature or passages. The drawings and pictures help them to portray the character as well as to show their understanding of the matter, in what they have read.*

Pictures were further recognised as a strategy that assisted learners in self-expression, helping them to make their learning more concrete. Two learners observed that

*...Pictures also enable them to express themselves and this assists them in learning.*

*...Giving an answer in the form of a drawing brings out the image of what one has in mind.*

Teachers observed another benefit of drawing and pictures which is assisting in improving learners' handwriting skills. Learners could also transfer content from pictures and so improve their language ability, displaying their knowledge through descriptions. Busi and several learners stated that

*...Students learn to draw pictures themselves, and by doing so they are improving their handwriting.*

*...Pictures and drawings help in composition writing and as such learners are able to develop a composition based on the given pictures or drawings.*

*...The drawings help one to remember what has been learned. One can use own words basing one on the pictures seen and as a result give a clear description. Also, something drawn is not easily forgotten.*

Teachers also noted observations in this regard that pictures could assist learners to draw certain characteristics from read passages and in this way apply their knowledge. Lintle observed that learners

*...Also see beyond the pictures, they can see character attributes and can make a role model out of such, a lot of things, even those not specified in the syllabus. These are needed and helpful in life.*

Another benefit concerned skills development while using pictures and drawings. According to teachers and learners, the skills learned from the use of pictures and drawings included all the skills listed in the questionnaires

(cooperation, trust, caring, openness, decision-making and others) as well as creative ability, interpretation, expression, caring, openness, decision-making, demonstration, accuracy and artistic value. However a small number of learners believed that there were no skills learned from using pictures and drawings.

There were also some possible additional skills identified by the teachers: interpretation skills, critical thinking, imitating, perception, legibility or clarity of handwriting, developing imaginative powers and creativity.

Learners indicated that the activity enabled them to think critically in attempting to solve some problems. One learner puts this idea in words by saying, "pictures challenge one's thinking since seeing is believing."

Regarding suggestions for future improvement, learners expressed a need to have modern equipment such as televisions and computers in schools. Both television and ICT were considered as visual teaching aids that can be used in the daily teaching and learning process. One learner suggested

*...Watching television should be included in the timetable as it is considered to be another effective strategy of teaching. Maybe allowing learners to watch certain videos, videotaped programmes or live to air television, can help to achieve an assigned task.*

Most learners also thought that there was a need for computers, as they believed that they were vital equipment for learning. They believed access to the Internet would assist them in their learning, particularly because of the pictures and drawings they could download from websites. Concerning improvement in reading while using visuals, learners suggested the inclusion of modern technology. Several learners proposed that

*...Some subjects should be taught through the use of computers, as these computers can provide a mountain of information.*

*...They have to read poems and novels aloud in order to improve pronunciation.*

*...Technology studies have to be included in the school curriculum to help learners think broadly and the establishment of information*

*communication technology where students can manage to have access to computers and Internet.*

As another visual teaching material, learners thought that there should be school magazines or newspapers with quiz sections and relevant information about the school and the subjects taught. One learner expressed that

*...This would help learners improve their vocabularies. These are full of pictures and drawings, which can be used in language learning and teaching.*

Teachers supported learners in the desire to have greater access to visual learning tools, as they believed that learners needed access to a range of visual media to develop strong language skills. Lineo suggested the

*...Use of newspapers, magazines, television, and radio to be maximized in order to enable effective teaching and learning of languages.*

Learners also suggested that they had to have a break from the usual manner of learning. One learner puts this idea in words by saying that they had to

*...Learn music and other fun things as well as have visitors (resource persons) from other places in order to share learning and ideas with them other than always having their same teachers.*

In support of the changed mode of teaching, another learner recommended

*...They could have improved extra activities like taking school trips as another form of teaching and learning.*

Several learners also considered access to a library as another visual teaching approach. They expressed the idea that

*...Schools must have libraries with various books which will help in learning and reading further on the entire subjects.... library classes have to be enforced in order to improve learning and teaching English and Sesotho literature including other subjects as well.*

Teachers also put forward suggestions towards the improvement of language teaching while using pictures and drawings. Patience recommended that teachers have to

*...Establish English and Sesotho projects like competitions, fares and inter visits with other schools for debate so that they emphasise on learning as a group and then can even build self-confidence, assertiveness in their students.*

In order to show the relevance and importance of visuals, teachers also noted observations on the teaching materials they used and those that are needed in the classroom. Lintle proposed

*...More language books with pictures and drawings need to be supplied in schools so that students and teachers can use them.*

#### **4.6.5 Incorporating national and international issues**

There are certain issues of national and global concern, which teachers have to address in their teaching. These issues are not suggested in the syllabus but nonetheless are concerns at a national level in Lesotho as well as worldwide. These include issues such as gender, HIV/AIDS, abuse in different forms, human rights and life skills and their relation to social and moral values.

Both learners and teachers considered that some of these emerging issues were addressed in the teaching and learning process through the use of learner-centred strategies. In this study, learners and teachers considered the relevance of these issues in their daily lives. Teachers reflected that they focused on these issues since learners needed to be equipped with information relating to them. They addressed the following:

*...Gender, abuse, environment, HIV/AIDS Pandemic, self-esteem and independence.*

A significant number of learners also perceived that teachers dealt with a range of issues that concerned them and their decision-making. Four learners expressed that their teachers addressed

*...Life and culture, traditional Sesotho marriage, boy friends and girl friends, learners' and teachers' friends, peer pressure, problems one might encounter in the future and how to overcome them, family issues, career planning, different emotional and physical changes of a growing person, relationships, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, guidance in studies, tertiary education and the Sesotho culture.*

#### **4.7 Additional suggestions for improvement**

While the main focus for this study involved consideration of the organisational and instructional strategies that teachers used to promote learner-centred classrooms, teachers and learners were asked an open-ended question which called for their suggestions about how to improve the teaching and learning of languages in future. Both teachers and learners covered a range of ideas in their responses. They included improvements in the general teaching of languages that specifically dealt with a conducive classroom environment, namely: learning resources, school organisation and timetabling, professional ethics and learning relationships, teacher education and teacher professional development, national and international emerging issues and learner responsibility.

##### **4.7.1 Learning resources**

Both learners and teachers indicated a need for a range of teaching and learning aids. These included books, libraries, and use of computers. There were proposals in connection to the availability of books. Books were considered a primary teaching material; therefore books should be available in the classrooms, be inexpensive and accessible, and contain improved teaching methods including learner-centred strategies. Several learners, together with teachers Lintle, Lerato and Patience, proposed the following:

*...They require new and improved library books so that they can improve on both their reading skills and their skills in seeking information.*

*...Language books have to be easily available as well as*

*inexpensive.*

*...More language books need to be supplied in schools so that students and teachers can use them.*

*...More textbooks on the teaching of language using these varied learner-centred teaching and learning methods could assist those teachers who sometimes cannot manage to attend the workshops*

*...Students have to be provided with the relevant materials and teaching aids to cover the syllabus. As part of learning materials, students have to read newspapers including magazines a lot as they also provide some information.*

Both learners and teachers also proposed that access to a library with relevant books was significant in improving language learning. Three learners observed

*...Schools must have libraries with various books which will help in learning and reading further on the entire subjects.*

*...Library classes have to be enforced in order to improve learning and teaching English and Sesotho literature including other subjects as well.*

*...They have to be facilitated to use the library whenever they like during school hours as they think this will assist them in widening their knowledge and help them in doing research too.*

*...Library classes have to be enforced in order to improve learning English literature and this calls for improved library facilities.*

A significant number of learners and teachers suggested the inclusion of computers in the curriculum as another learning resource. Lintle, a teacher, and several learners proposed

*...Technology studies have to be included in the school curriculum to help learners to think broadly.*

*...There should be the establishment of information communication*

*technology in which students can be able to have access to computers and Internet.*

#### **4.7.2 School organisation and timetabling**

Another suggestion concerned classroom organisation. This organisation involved the number of lessons learners had to take per day. Three learners indicated that

*...Same class streams must not be put together as in some cases students become uncontrollable.*

*...Classes should not be given too many lessons in a day, as learners become tired and this hinders good work. In addition, the class must not be overcrowded so that the teacher can be able to attend to all the students individually.*

Most learners expressed a desire for flexibility in the choice of subjects and increased quality of teaching

*...Subjects have to be optional not compulsory, only qualified teachers to be the ones who teach unlike now where there are unqualified teachers.*

#### **4.7.3 Professional ethics and learning relationships**

Both teachers and learners expressed ideas about improving themselves in their daily teaching and learning. This involved the teachers' and learners' attitudes and behaviour towards the language learning process. Several learners proposed organisation and commitment of teaching staff in school, attitude and behaviour of teachers and learners alike are important in creating a positive environment. Learners together with Lerato, a teacher, proposed the following:

*...Skilled, qualified and experienced teachers are not supposed to be teaching higher classes only but even the junior classes too so that they help students in their learning.*

*...Teachers should not miss classes as this becomes a*

*disadvantage on learners.*

*...Teachers are not supposed to use a stick in class and beat learners up.*

*...To be free and understanding to them and also they expect them to be polite and active. In addition, teachers have to respect students as well as love them and they should further communicate with students so that they can discuss their work and progress.*

*...Teachers are not to come to class in a bad mood since that frightens learners; as a result learners become nervous and scared to ask questions. Teachers have to be more lenient towards students to avoid intimidation and they should also not solve students' problems by punishing them.*

*...Both teachers and students have to be trained on how to behave in class, that is, teachers to be polite to students and vice versa. Both teachers and students have to be cooperative in every aspect so that learners can be able to grasp learning.*

*...Teachers have to be patient as they deal with students with different abilities and if they know their learners well, they will also know which learner-centred strategies are suitable for them.*

*...Teachers have to be strict not lenient so as to enforce them to study.*

*...Both learners and teachers need to be trained on how to behave in class. Teachers have to be polite to students as well as other teachers, and learners also vice versa. It is advisable for teachers and students to be cooperative in class and out of class. Students have to stop using drugs as they can damage their brains.*

*...Teachers are supposed to help students learn other than spoon-feed them.*

*...English teachers have to be able to explore all the spheres of life,*

*as this will enable them to touch a variety of issues when they teach and will help them to be knowledgeable too.*

#### **4.7.4 Teacher education and teacher professional development**

Teachers recommended attendance at and participation in relevant workshops in order to enhance their delivery of content as another proposal. Patience, Lerato, Lineo, Thabelo and two learners recommended that

*...Teachers have to be encouraged to attend workshops in order to exchange views regarding how to teach and what improvements to be included in teaching.*

*...Regional workshops have to be in place, whereby a region, a district and an area can conduct workshops of this nature, so that teachers share the same ideas on using the learner-centred strategies including other useful hints and ideas necessary in everyday teaching.*

*...The government should hold teachers' workshops in each district per quarter so as to help them with the latest teaching methods.*

*...The MOET has to hold workshops especially for newly qualified teachers in order to equip them with necessary skills needed in languages teaching.*

*...MOET workshops should keep focusing on the importance and relevance of using the suggested learner-centred activities in the syllabus. Maybe it could also be of help that at these very workshops a demonstration be undertaken where these approaches are fully used in order to encourage the beginning teachers as well as the lazy ones. The lazy and beginning teachers have to be assigned tasks at those particular workshops. This will help those lazy teachers to perform a given task and in performing it well, they would also manage to do things on their own since they have now build their self-esteem.*

*...Frequent in-servicing of teachers through workshops on the use*

*of learner-centred strategies. The MOET as well as the language subject associations can do this.*

*...Teachers from schools that perform well have to share the skills with other teachers so that they produce good results as well, any teacher who comes up with the best idea should be given an award by the school or even the MOET.*

A proposal in relation to teachers working together in the same school or with other schools was also put forward. Lineo recommended

*...Team-teaching in different schools and in the same school, so that teachers would be able to assist one another.*

Another suggestion focused on the role of teacher educators in supporting the implementation of the learner-centred approach. Patience suggested

*...The teacher training institutions have to also equip student teachers with these learner-centred strategies so that when they come into classrooms they are well prepared and well equipped.*

#### **4.7.5 National and international issues**

Learners proposed that it was important that teachers stressed the life skills while they were teaching. They were also aware that these life skills could be addressed while talking about national and global emerging issues. One learner suggested that

*...Teachers have to emphasise on life skills when they come across them as they deal with literature concepts. They have to use this as a strategy to address national and global emerging issues such as abuse, environment, gender and life skills.*

#### **4.7.6 Learner responsibility**

Several learners recognised a need to take responsibility for their work habits and practices. Other than being helped by the teachers, several learners were aware that they had to be accountable. Acting responsibly could even assist them to engage in competitive projects as a way of learning about their culture

and displaying creativity. That is why they suggested

*...They have to give themselves special time to be helped with things they do not understand. They have to say something in class and not be afraid to make mistakes, as it is through the mistakes that they will learn what is correct. They have to be let to say what is on their minds and to be allowed to say one's opinion in all subjects. They have to consult with teachers on issues they did not understand, as this will help them to know more and better. They have to participate in class always and to participate in debates weekly as this can help them to learn more and they even consider that they have to speak English at school. They have to read books a lot as this can assist them in learning to create their own stories too.*

*...To write essays and compete with other classes, a necessity as this will encourage them to learn more, to be advised to start a project in which they can at the end produce traditional handicrafts as a way of helping them to learn and to appreciate their culture too.*

Another suggested improvement concerned the development and improvement of skills in various cases, and the use of a variety of content. These skills could be content-based, communication-based or life skills. Teachers and learners made suggestions in regard to developing skills, suggesting that emerging issues could be used as the basis for learning. Some of these skills assisted learners to develop their independence. Several learners and a teacher, Lineo, recommended that

*...Students have to be given chances to research on their own as well as introducing them to skills development where students will know how to interview other students, how to make decisions on their own as well as using the communication skills.*

*...Learners have to work together helping each other in their daily learning. They have to try to be independent in all respects and they consider part of this as to have a free period once a week where they can be permitted to work in groups, as they will be sharing*

*knowledge by doing so and this will be the chance to be given freedom when they are learning. They have to work hard and concentrate on their work.*

*...Learners should be given a lot of assignments and homework daily in order to keep them busy, so that they can be able to build their independence skills. This would also help them to avoid problems like being in negative peer groups, as they can be harmful. They have to read extensively and even have to present important information to their respective classes and they believe that a lot of home work has to be given to them so that they can learn how to investigate and research on their own. They need to be given enough time for their studies, enough time to rest and when resting, they want to be allowed to have games with other schools as a way of refreshing minds.*

For improvement, most learners considered that certain interventions could be used to help them when they do not manage to perform well. One learner recommended

*...They might have night classes for the subjects they do not understand well and be taught library skills, as this will help them to learn how to use words appropriately and to acquire more general knowledge.*

Discussions of these findings will be undertaken in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5: Discussions

This chapter will discuss the findings in Chapter 4 and connect to the themes identified in the literature review. The discussion is organised to match the headings used to report the findings in Chapter 4:

- learners' perceptions about language preference
- incorporating past experience in language learning
- organisational strategies for learning
- instructional strategies learning
- additional suggestions for further improvement.

### 5.1 Learners' perceptions about language preference

The constitution of Lesotho states that Sesotho and English are official languages, and therefore every learner has to study them (The Constitution of Lesotho 1966). According to specific language education aims articulated by the Ministry of Education in Lesotho, languages can be learned for a number of reasons, namely:

- *functional literacy,*
- *work preparation,*
- *catering for different talents, opportunities and talents,*
- *incorporating Basotho culture,*
- *thinking critically and*
- *being responsible (Ministry of Education, 1994).*

The current syllabus in Lesotho, emphasises the earlier policy on language learning by outlining that learners need to

- *develop language skills.*
- *show active involvement in social activities.*
- *acquire literacy skills.*
- *appreciate their culture and other cultures (Ministry of Education 2002).*

English is also a passing subject. This means that even if a student passes all the subjects but fails English, s/he is considered as having failed. Apart from it being a passing subject, it is the medium of instruction for all subjects except for Sesotho language.

The learners who participated in this study prefer learning English to learning Sesotho. Learners are aware of the relevance of studying and knowing English because it is a subject which is compulsory to pass and is a medium of instruction in other subjects. Learners display a high level of critical thinking and awareness about the relevance of the subjects they study. Learners are aware of various motivations to study English. Learners are also motivated to learn and improve their language skill for other perceived benefits. Specifically, they are aware that although they study English as a second language, they need it for most of their lives for a range of different purposes:

- English as a passing subject adds to the importance of English in the students' minds.
- Learners clearly use English while learning other subjects, and therefore need to do well in it. Also significant is the fact that all subjects other than Sesotho are taught through using English, so success in English is linked to wider academic success.
- Learners acknowledge that they need English to communicate with people who are not Basotho and, as a result, do not speak Sesotho.

- English enables smooth relations and understanding among different language speakers in a wide range of situations.
- English language is considered a possible tool for work and careers. Some learners even consider being English teachers in future.
- In learners' minds English does not only have a role when they are studying or when they are at work, but also has a potential role outside these areas.

On the other hand, learners see the cultural value of learning Sesotho. Those learners who prefer Sesotho are mindful of their cultural heritage and are proud of their nationality and identity. These students base their language preference on quite different values. Their reasons for preferring Sesotho can be considered cultural reasons, such as wanting to be in touch with their heritage and fellow citizens. In this way they demonstrate the significance of patriotism. Such values are reflected in the national educational aims, cited in the Educational Manifesto (1984). Even though these students must learn English, they still treasure their language and culture.

This suggests the importance of teachers being aware of learners' different motivations so that they then design learner-centred activities and strategies that reflect these different purposes. Vygotsky (1986) and McCombs et al. (1997) argue that in order to practice the learner-centred approach efficiently teachers need to know their learners' motivations, needs, interests and aspirations so that they are able to plan appropriate learner-centred activities in order for learning to take place.

## **5.2 Incorporating past experience in language learning**

The learner-centred approach acknowledges the use of past experience in learning as this will assist learners to use their prior knowledge to assist them to understand new knowledge. It is therefore significant to focus on and emphasise past experience since it will make learning manageable.

The literature discussed in Chapter 2 suggests that incorporating past experience and recognising learners' skills and knowledge is important in

creating a learner-centred classroom. The literature indicates that taking this approach:

- makes learning meaningful (Moore 1999).
- brings about engagement and personal responsibility (Lambert et al. 1998).
- helps learners to shape meaning and acquire new knowledge (Gillespie 2002).
- helps in generating new combinations to bring personal meaning and perspective (Good et al. 1997).

In the context of Lesotho, the use of the learner-centred approach also means acknowledging learners' previous experiences and building on them to develop new knowledge and skills. In teacher-centred classrooms content might be taught without reference to students' backgrounds or previous experience.

Based on this study a number of observations about the use of past experience can be made.

One strategy used by teachers in Lesotho to achieve a learner-centred classroom is to incorporate learners' past experiences. This enables learning and teaching significantly. This study shows that the use of past experience provides a way of enabling learning and of transferring knowledge between learners themselves, and between teachers and learners. As a result learners gain significant knowledge from past experience. The definition of the learner-centred approach identified in the literature outlines that learners 'focus on ideas including their backgrounds' (past knowledge or experience). The literature indicates that not only does the use of personal experience support understanding, but that learning may occur more quickly and build on previous understandings in a kind of cumulative way (McCombs et al. 1997). However, from the classroom observations conducted as part of this thesis, the use of past experience is very minimal.

Past knowledge brings a significant contribution to classroom learning irrespective of which subject is being taught. The learners' reference to home is

of particular interest, as it supports current educational thinking that emphasises the connection between home and school for sound learning to take place. Learners draw from a range of past experiences to understand the present occurrences. Therefore teachers need to emphasise the importance of these experiences, and to use past experience frequently as it enables new learning to take place.

The prior experience of learners is also examined as a motivating and a supporting influence on student learning. Teachers and learners understand learning to be a complex combination of past experience, skills and expressions and they perceive learning as an on-going scaffolded experience. It is in fact essential to draw from and focus on any form of preceding experience as learners are enabled to give a clear picture of what took place in their display of being creative when writing different forms of essays and letters.

Revisiting the past experiences however, helps some learners not to repeat undesirable actions. These learners are making connections between the past and the future through their experience of learning, and so doing, developing a sense of their own place (which they identify as their self-confidence). They learn from their mistakes and the lessons are learned for life.

Through previous experience learners are compelled to build certain skills, which are necessary in life. It is evident that certain vital skills are moulded in learners as they use past experience in current learning situations. The use of this previous knowledge is similar to addressing other issues in learning which are not syllabus requirements.

The next section will explore in depth discussion of learner-centred strategies which focus on learners' involvement and engagement as these activities are used.

### **5.3 Learner-centred teaching strategies**

Learners observe that the same teaching strategies can be used for learning both English and Sesotho. Clearly, learners believe that there are no activities specific to one language, but rather, that a range of similar strategies can be used with either language. Although the knowledge content of the two

languages might be different, learners identify a similarity in learning processes. A possible advantage of this is that each language might become easier to acquire as learners transfer knowledge and learning strategies from one language to the other.

Particular strategies suit some learners better than others. Learners are aware that different learner-centred activities have varying skills to offer and not all the students understand in the same manner when these are used. Teachers need to vary the use of learner-centred activities in order to cater for a wide range of learners' abilities. Learners suggest that,

*...Different methods of teaching can be used so that students may be able to choose the ones they are comfortable with.*

Teachers therefore have to plan their lessons well in advance so that they can choose activities that will enable each learner to gain significant knowledge.

When teachers use these strategies learners learn in a number of ways. Creating a learner-centred environment and classroom enables learners to enrich their learning. They develop skills, develop different intelligences and connect their learning with issues and ideas. These are global and national issues, and past experience. Such issues mostly deal with cultural aspects, environmental and social issues such as life skills, HIV/AIDS, abuse and gender. Both learners and teachers can focus on developing and emphasising a range of skills so that learners might practice and participate in the issues. International bodies such as WHO, UNESCO and UNFPA show the relevance and importance of addressing these issues and equipping learners with necessary skills. While doing all these, the main focus is on learning language. The definition of learner-centred strategies mentioned by teachers in Chapter 4 indicates that learning occurs in a number of ways: through inquiry, student involvement in the learning process, promoting independent learning, and by placing emphasis on discussion and demonstrating learning. This indicates that when using learner-centred strategies, learning occurs because information is shared among the students and their teachers in many forms, and is explored through various ways, such as: asking, researching, reading and presenting. Gardner (1983) together with Stanford (2003) also argue that learners gain

understanding through different intelligences and that in some cases a number of intelligences can help consolidate the idea that is being discussed. Weimer (2002) defines learner-centred teaching as “...*an instruction that focuses on what learners are doing; this will result in the building of responsibility in learning*”. Therefore in a learner-centred classroom, both teachers and learners are working towards achieving the same goal: students’ engagement so that learning takes place.

The various learner-centred teaching and learning strategies used by teachers in Lesotho are associated with some of Gardner’s (1983) and R I C Publications (2004) ideas about multiple intelligences. This research shows that teachers incorporated a range of learner-centred strategies that match with some of the intelligences. These include: drama and simulation, (bodily kinaesthetic intelligence); songs and music and dances, (musical intelligence); games, puzzles and riddles, (various intelligences); pictures and drawings, (visual and spatial intelligence); logical intelligence which is required in problem-solving skills; working together in groups and pairs (interpersonal intelligence), and working alone (intrapersonal intelligence). Verbal or linguistic intelligence and logical intelligence are prevalent in almost all of the strategies dealt with, as language is a tool to ensure that every strategy is effectively carried out. There is also emotional intelligence which features in most of the strategies as it requires learners to know themselves, their strengths and weaknesses and to work with others.

A range of skills is needed in learners’ and teachers’ daily learning and teaching. Most importantly, cooperative and social skills are thought to be of high relevance; and this relates to the observation made by (Cheng et al. 2000), the (National Institute for Educational Development 1999) and (Schrenko 1996) that in the world today people have to operate as a team and as a result need to have social skills. The idea of using skills in a broad sense like this connects well to (McCombs et al. 1997) who claim that learner-centred approaches promote high levels of motivation, which in turn result in achievement for learners; they could be working alone or as a group, using past experience and knowledge, using specific talents and developing new skills. It is also evident in the national educational aims, especially the aim that says education has

*...To provide suitable opportunities for a variety of practical and creative activities aimed at personal development and in particular, the growth of positive attitudes to work (Ministry of Education 1992).*

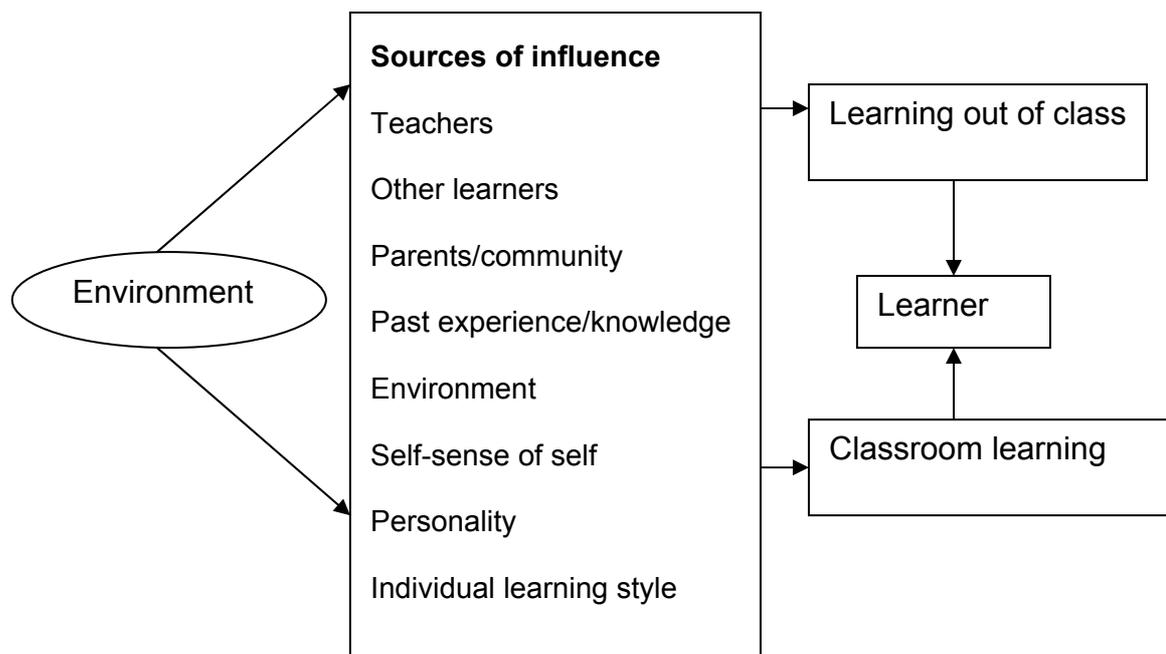
Not only are learners gaining knowledge when these strategies are used, but they also learn and acquire skills they need in and out of class, even when out of school. This indicates that the skills they learn when engaged in learner-centred classrooms are for life and therefore long-term not short-term.

Apart from cooperative and social skills, learners recommend that they need to be assisted with specific skills. As a result of developing these various skills, learners are able to direct their curiosity as they become more inquisitive, and this results in independent or group research in order to collect more information. These skills include:

- research skills, such as those needed in interviewing or in being interviewed.
- decision-making skills and communication skills.

In support of these ideas, teachers suggest projects, competitions, fairs, debates and quizzes that can engage learners in a range of activities which help them to apply learned skills such as cooperation, confidence, assertiveness and other life and communication skills.

While using the learner-centred approach, learning is not confined to a certain space or area and various sources influence learning. Learner-centred strategies provide and enable learning from various angles and sources. This suggests that not only does learning take place in the classroom, a formal setting, but it can also occur informally outside the classroom. These various sources of learning can be summarised as in the following figure:



*Figure 7: Summary of sources of influences that could enable learner-centred learning*

When using the learner-centred approach teachers indicate that learners become more involved. As learners are involved in the learner-centred approach, they become better at working together with their peers and also at working more independently. Also, learners can investigate areas of specific interest. The learner-centred strategies identified by teachers and learners are reflective of the aims specified in the seminar report on the localisation of senior secondary (O’Level) curriculum (Ministry of Education 1995). These state that education and educators have to ensure that learners are fully involved in the learning process and that they become independent learners. Furthermore, all Education for All (EFA) goals are addressed. This applies to all the learner-centred teaching methods and indeed using them would be a means of addressing these aims.

With the use of learner-centred strategies, the role of the teacher changes. In a learner-centred classroom the teacher’s role is not primarily one of an authority. The teacher plays multiple roles such as: supporter, facilitator, friend, confidante and guide. Learners also expect their teachers to ask them questions during every day’s teaching, and to use this questioning as an indication as to whether or not learners are learning something. Learners themselves believe the

questions should not be of the same type but should be various questions, which would enable them to think critically and creatively. They also state that during the teaching they expect many examples from the teacher, so that they can fully understand what is being taught. This shows that in the preparation and planning stage the teachers need to ensure that a variety of questions that will assist learners to gain knowledge are used.

Certain learner-centred methods are not in use in this study. The literature suggests some learner-centred methods of which there is no evidence in this study. Neither learners nor teachers mention them. These are thematic instruction and the use of graphic designs. The researcher's assumption is that teachers in Lesotho may not be aware of these strategies or, if they are aware, they are not confident enough to use thematic instruction. This thematic approach could be used as a learner-centred strategy allowing teachers simultaneously to address emerging issues and develop skills while dealing with a particular theme from the syllabus content. In this manner learning might be conceptualised, and hence more meaningful to learners. This might then enable faster syllabus coverage as a number of themes could be addressed at once.

The suggestions proposed for future improvement indicate that the learner-centred methods are not used widely enough. Both learners and teachers have similar proposals in regard to the use of various learner-centred strategies, and both agree that these could be important in the language learning process. First, teachers have *"to consider using learner-centred methods a lot."* In addition to this proposal, learners display awareness of how their teachers use learner-centred strategies. Learners then propose the use of various learner-centred methods, which will require them to be fully engaged. They propose that teachers should try to engage learners and assist them to learn rather than tell them certain things. This might be the reason why learners further recommend that

*...All teachers should try to practise learner-centred teaching methods as these methods have different skills to offer learners.*

This suggests that teachers use the strategies, but not to the maximum. Schrenko (1996), argues the use of various learner-centred strategies as they

offer higher-level thinking, pro-social behaviour and meet social adjustment needs as well as helping learners understand others' diverse learning. Learners are aware of this. Consequently, they raise the suggestions for an increased use of learner-centred strategies.

The suggested improvements outline that learners are able to distinguish between principles and activities which would improve the effective use of the learner-centred approach. These improvements can be summarised in this figure.

Principles	Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not examination oriented</li> <li>• Have a variety of skills</li> <li>• Inclusion of ICT</li> <li>• Effective library usage</li> <li>• Arrange resource person visit</li> <li>• Be learner-centred</li> <li>• Assist to build independency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitions, fairs</li> <li>• Debates, quizzes</li> <li>• Take excursions/trips</li> <li>• Use of computers</li> <li>• Read literature texts aloud</li> </ul>

*Figure 8: Summary of suggested principles and activities which can improve strategies*

#### **5.4 Organisational strategies and learning relationships**

Working cooperatively is not a new concept in the Sesotho culture. Demanding work is done in the *matsema*-collective gathering as people work on the same task. Culturally, Basotho are people who like to work collectively as the work becomes easily managed and time is also saved. This suggests that working cooperatively in a group is not a foreign ideology to the Basotho nation; Sesotho even has idioms that support the notion of collaborative work. Examples of such idioms are: *kopano ke matla*—strength is unity; *letšoele le beta poho*—many people can manage to get hold of one bull (major task) quickly and easily. This suggests that learners need to be made aware of the existence of this cultural pattern so that they can see that working together in a formal setting is an

extension of what they already know, and thus is connected to using past experience.

#### 5.4.1 Working together: group work or pair work

Learners and teachers see a number of benefits in working together. This strategy can be connected to Gardner’s (1983) ideas about multiple intelligence classification, where interpersonal intelligence is considered. In this study, this intelligence especially encompasses both group work and pair work. This intelligence requires learners to be able to work cooperatively with others in a group and to communicate verbally and non-verbally with other people. This will result in recognising others’ feelings, beliefs and intentions and understanding others and their feelings. This is where emotional intelligence also comes into place, since learners have to know, manage and control their feelings and emotions so that they can accommodate, understand and manage others’ feelings and emotions as they are working in a group or in pairs. These intelligences that apply here are summarised in this figure.

<b>Multiple intelligences</b>	<b>Practices in Lesotho language classrooms</b>
Interpersonal intelligence	Working together in groups, pairs
Intrapersonal intelligence	Working alone
Emotional intelligence	Awareness in knowing self and being able to relate to others

*Figure 9: Multiple intelligences and working together*

In working together a range of significant skills are acquired and enhanced. Learners acquire and develop a range of skills. These include:

- Interpersonal skills,
- Explorative skills,
- Problem-solving skills and

- Social skills.

Cohen et al (1994) indicate that learners acquire these skills and abilities when

*...Using prosocial skills which will help them to understand others' diverse knowledge as they display high level of critical thinking, in reaction to societal changes including a new emphasis on teamwork in the business sector*

As learners work together, they

*...Learn to internalise and transform the content with others. This becomes important in the development of new understanding and skills.*

While working together in groups and pairs, learners become engaged in a team experience, and they use the knowledge they have picked up from their peers and internalise it individually. Fogarty (1991) in the BUILD method identifies important elements of cooperative learning, another form of group work. These elements are: building of higher order thinking, uniting different learners in face-to-face interactions; individual learning and responsibility; overseeing and discussing interactions; and developing social skills. While using these methods, learners are not alone but working with others.

Interdependence among group members is a significant skill that has to be developed. Learners are moulded to be able to work together without competing, hence, assisting one another to achieve an expected outcome. Working together is vital in the process of becoming an independent learner who is able to apply all the knowledge and skills learned in the group or pair work. After working as a group, a learner is independent enough to work individually, putting into practice all that was gathered from the group. It is through this exercise that

*...Student learning and achievement increase the critical thinking skills which promote greater transfer of learning (Gillies et al. 2003).*

Learners are required to be cooperative, accommodating and to share ideas. It is through sharing ideas and building relationships that certain necessary skills,

which help learners to think logically, critically and to solve problems, are developed and improved. These skills are not only needed in the classroom but also in life (Thousand et al. 1994; Gillies et al. 2003). People can learn a lot from each other and by doing so they can make their own meaning after sharing their experiences with others in collaborative debates. International bodies such as WHO and UNESCO also put emphasis on these skills because it is recognised that they promote the qualities considered to be consistent with world peace and harmony.

Learners are being equipped with the necessary social skills to help them interact with one another. Such skills are particularly important for building and strengthening positive attitudes towards work. As learners work together in groups or pairs, they learn a lot by sharing their different ideas. Even those who had no knowledge before, now are in a position to learn something beneficial from their colleagues. This helps in building and improving both social and linguistic understanding, which learners also need in order to learn language. The national aims of Lesotho call for learning that equips all students with the skills that will enable achievement and support self-improvement both at school and in later life. The constitution of Lesotho also requires that

*Education is directed to the full development of the human personality and sense of dignity and strengthening the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (The Constitution of Lesotho 1966).*

In this technique of working together and focusing on the mentioned skills, these aims, if well carried out could be addressed so that learners would become responsible citizens.

Even though working together is used as a strategy to help learners gain more knowledge this activity is not used as the literature suggests. Teachers do use cooperative learning but not in an expected manner. They often use group work and pair work to keep the learners busy, not necessarily to help learners gain some in-depth knowledge or learning at the end of a particular lesson. From the observation schedule and focused discussion it is apparent that teachers need more assistance on the expected use of this strategy. This might be the reason

why teachers also included a suggestion on how teacher training could help teacher trainees with relevant learner-centred strategies and their application.

It is while learning takes place through working together that skills, values and morals are developed and addressed. Learners can then build individual learning through working alone. This leads to the next category of learners working alone.

#### **5.4.2 Working alone**

Both learners and teachers consider working alone to be vital. The findings indicate that at some stage within a learner-centred approach, learners need to work individually in order to internalise knowledge. Both learners and teachers consider that more group-oriented strategies should not be used in isolation, but coupled with working alone, as there are different skills acquired from different methods. In most cases working alone helps learners to demonstrate independence so that ultimately they can practice interdependence.

There are cases when learners have to work alone. They include instances:

- when learners want to express their own feelings or views without being distracted by others.
- when learners are writing and they need to maintain their own ideas without influence from others.

Learners, through this experience of working alone, are helped to aim higher, to work hard and to understand more. This strategy can come at the end of other activities in order for the learner to internalise and reflect on the newly acquired information and to build self-confidence and independence. Learners are then able to transfer knowledge and this makes it possible to adjust to what is being taught daily. As the learners' preference for working alone depends on the work situation and the type of task in hand (Lunt 2001), teachers have to give room for occasions where learners can display their individuality and independence.

Like other learner-centred strategies, working alone connects clearly with Gardner's multiple intelligences (Gardner 1983), especially intrapersonal intelligence. This intelligence deals with self, thinking processes, self-reflection,

and self-knowledge and understanding. The participation and the way the students are organised, support the development of intrapersonal intelligence in group work. This learning underpins the idea of using learner-centred methods where one can learn from the group and then internalise the new knowledge through asking for and getting solutions to problems. Individual learners know their abilities and use discretion as to how best to use them. Emotional intelligence also features here, as learners have to know, understand, control and manage their own feelings so that even when in a group, the individual becomes able to fulfil a given task. When students know their own strengths and weaknesses and are able to manage them as demonstrated by working alone, then they also have a good foundation for working with others. Through much self-reflection, the learner is able to relate with others. Emotional intelligence therefore cuts across all of the learner-centred strategies. Strength in this intelligence results in good decision-making.

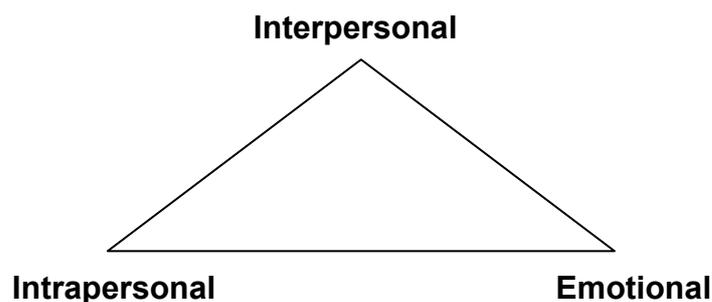
Learners need to apply certain skills in and outside of the classroom so that learning can be effective. Foremost, there is individual decision-making, as the learner who is by himself or herself has to make his or her own decisions. In doing so, one displays independence together with self-confidence. It is advisable to let learners work individually so as to enhance these skills. This also requires learners to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses so that they display their self-confidence and independence. A range of necessary skills have to be used in order to mould and prepare learners in the light of and in fulfilment of the national educational aims of Lesotho, which say that 'education has to mould responsible citizens'. The Constitution of Lesotho also proclaims that

*Education is directed to the full development of the human personality and sense of dignity and strengthening the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (The Constitution of Lesotho 1966).*

It is through working alone that learners can use those acquired skills in their daily lives, at work or not at work, observed and unobserved in order to fulfil what the constitutional and the educational aims aspire to.

Teachers should try to vary the use of pair work, group work and individual work within the same lesson. In this way teachers can ensure that students, after being engaged in learning with others, are also provided with the opportunity to work alone towards the end of the lesson in order to ensure that they are building their independence and confidence. This implies that institutions that are responsible for teacher training are expected to take a leading role in equipping teacher trainees with as many teaching strategies as possible so that they end up knowing how and when best to use the learner-centred methods, and whether they can use them separately or simultaneously. Those teachers who are already teaching need in-service workshops to assist them in using a range of ways of organising learners for optimal learning to take place.

The multiple intelligences that specifically work with these organisational strategies can be summed up in this figure, which shows that these intelligences depend on one another; one cannot be on its own.



*Figure 10: Interrelatedness of intelligences that work with organisational strategies*

Because these intelligences are interdependent it is important that learners have the opportunity to share ideas and skills so that the individual learner can experience and become adept at each of them.

### **5.5 Instructional strategies for learning**

The strategies in this section require learners to be engaged as they learn languages. Learners can be engaged in a number of activities, namely: drama or role-play; songs or music and dances; games; and visuals. These strategies match with some of Gardner's multiple intelligences. Those intelligences that work with instructional strategies in language learning are summarised in this

figure.

Multiple intelligences	Practices in Lesotho language classrooms
Linguistic and verbal	Debates, songs, pictures, games, poems, drama/ role-play
Musical and rhythmic	Songs, poems, dances, games
Spatial and visual	Pictures, drawings, books, photographs, games
Bodily kinaesthetic	Songs, dances, games, drama/role-play
Logical and mathematical	Games, puzzles

*Figure 11: Multiple intelligences and instructional strategies for learning*

#### 5.5.1 Using drama and role-play

Using drama or role-play as a learner-centred strategy helps students gain knowledge in language content, develop and improve their language acquisition. In drama and role-play, learners are directly involved, this gives them an opportunity to acquire meaning visually, orally and kinaesthetically. Smith (1972), McMaster (1988), and Lin (2003) argue that meaningful contexts and motivation to practice literacy use is significant when learners are engaged in drama. It is not only knowledge that is gained, however. Learners indicate that a message can be accessed through a play or drama. This may be relevant and helpful to them because it calls for them to change their way of living, not only when they are at school, but even for the rest of their lives. This therefore implies that drama and role-play should be used as often as possible in order to address certain issues and messages.

This discussion draws on the theory of Gardner’s multiple intelligences (Gardner 1983) with particular reference to bodily kinaesthetic learning. In this intelligence learners use their bodies to express emotions and to play games. R.I.C Publications (2004) further observes that in drama, learners undertake

hands-on activities and, as a result, their bodies are highly active.

Even though bodily kinaesthetic intelligence is the main intelligence apparent in drama and role-play, verbal intelligence also features in communicating and negotiating ideas. Learners, when undertaking this activity, need to use speech in communicating. Stanford (2003) states that bodily kinaesthetic intelligence requires learners to use their bodies, feelings and minds so that by taking part in a drama or role-play they also build knowledge.

Social values and skills are learned and certain social, problem-solving and health related life skills are developed through the use of drama and role-play. Learners develop confidence by participating in drama and role-play while they also develop collaborative and interpretative skills. Both learners and teachers have similar observations about the skills that drama and role-play can develop and the ways in which these activities mould learners' perceptions of their world. Learners become engaged with their culture through literature, especially in relation to Sesotho. The Sesotho literature, oral or written, is rich with significant skills that teachers need to emphasise. While both learners and teachers acknowledge that there a number of skills acquired from drama or role-play, they also reflect that such skills are developed not only for immediate learning purposes but also for use later in life. It is evident that these life skills are valued by such international bodies as WHO, UNESCO and UNICEF. They are also referred to in the revised aims in the reviewed syllabus. These aims require that education should

*...Develop skills that will tap into the learners' creativity, imagination and critical thinking skills, and will enable their active involvement in social activities. (Ministry of Education 2002)*

As an activity, therefore, drama and role-play relate to the national aims of education from the Educational Manifesto. Drama and role-play also emphasise the development of skills that learners need to know and use daily. The question is whether teachers and learners emphasise the value of such skills through a regular use of drama and role-play.

While using this learner-centred strategy of drama or role-play, learners are having fun, are interested and at the same time teachers manage to control

them so that learning takes place. When learners get directly involved in drama, they become more interested in learning (Smith 1972). As a result of this both teachers and learners agree on the improvement that can be made to language teaching using drama and role-play, particularly so that learning can be more fun and creative.

Both teachers and learners value the relevance of drama and role-play and see the benefit of this activity, and yet it is employed infrequently. This is clearly indicated by teachers' and learners' responses that it is used at least once a month. Teachers therefore need to consider using this activity more frequently as by doing so learners believe they would gain increased knowledge.

The next strategy which can be used as an instructional tool is that of music, songs and dances.

#### **5.5.2 Using music, songs and dances**

As another learner-centred strategy, music, songs and dances, can be used in order to enhance effective language learning. In the Sesotho culture and context, people sing and dance or use music all the time. They sing while at home, at church, working, not working, when happy or even when they are sad. Music, songs and dances are part of the culture and are therefore widely used.

Music, songs and dances can be used to engage learners in learning language. Both learners and teachers indicate that using music and other fun strategies make their learning more enjoyable. Songs have to be chosen wisely so that they will enrich learning opportunities. In many cases one has to memorise the songs in order to know them well. This may be why learners identify the process of learning songs as simplifying their process of learning poems. Poems are also part of the Sesotho culture and constitute part of the curriculum content. There is a strong suggestion here that not just any song can be used, but that songs have to be chosen wisely so that they have all the necessary information to provide effective learning in the traditions and culture of the Basotho.

The use of music and songs corresponds to a number of Gardner's multiple intelligences: musical and rhythmic intelligence, bodily kinaesthetic intelligence and verbal intelligence (Gardner 1983), (R I C Publications 2004). Within the

context of learning in Lesotho, this use of music and songs also incorporates the bodily kinaesthetic intelligence as music involves dance to express emotions. In this study the songs, music and dance, especially the Sesotho ones, require students to use their bodies. Music and songs go along with the dance and all are done simultaneously. Verbal intelligence also features because of the use of lyrics to communicate ideas. Students strong in musical intelligence learn best through activities involving music and sounds. Different tones, sounds from the environment, the human voice and musical instruments can enable this intelligence. In this study, songs, music, dances and poems are included in this intelligence as they help in the understanding and communicating of ideas and meanings.

The learning experienced by learners through the use of music in Lesotho is connected to Bloom's taxonomy. It is apparent in a number of domains such as knowledge, comprehension, evaluation, synthesis and application. Through composing a new song all these domains are being used. When one comprehends something, knowledge is gained, and to further show this comprehension, that knowledge is applied. Students then evaluate what should be included in a song, and finally, synthesis is required to compose the new song. Using the domains enables learners to demonstrate the learned skills especially those of creativity and composition.

Songs are an access point through which learners gain knowledge in language content and further appreciate the Sesotho culture and Sesotho language. Learners cherish the music, songs and dances that help them to know and appreciate their culture. Teachers indicated that learners sing these songs frequently in order to show their knowledge and engagement with them. The skills and lessons learned from songs, music and dance confirm the relevance and importance of this strategy. Teachers and learners use songs for various situations while learning language content.

Examples of these situations which help to make learning more enjoyable are:

- using songs to learn certain grammatical contexts.
- composing songs to show their understanding of what has been read

in a literature text.

- using music and songs to introduce or reinforce other language or literature content.
- using songs to act as a reminder.
- developing skills through songs and music.
- introducing and reinforcing significant lessons and messages through songs and music.

All these occurrences are underpinned by the national aim which says that education has

*...To provide suitable opportunities for a variety of practical and creative activities aimed at personal development and in particular, the growth of positive attitudes to work. (Ministry of Education 1992)*

This further tallies with the aims from the Educational Manifesto (Ministry of Education 1984) which states the kind of education that Basotho learners must acquire. Almost all the aims in this area have a bearing on the use of songs, music and dance.

Learners and teachers indicate that learning becomes easier and more meaningful when using music. Teachers use music widely in their teaching, and it is also evident that there are many learning opportunities recognised by students in the use of music. It is culturally and educationally appropriate to use music even more extensively than at present. Therefore teachers should consider using this activity more frequently. There is an underlying proposition that when music is used there has to be something tangible that listeners and learners can benefit from. This suggests that the songs used need to have messages and information that assist learners in learning language.

Learners suggest that to be most effective, songs and music should be alternated with other learner-centred strategies. Alternative strategies suggested by learners included taking trips and excursions, and having resource persons visit schools to share ideas on particular issues. Learners

considered that such alternatives would break the monotony of seeing the same teachers every-day for the whole year. Learners indicate that learning and knowledge cannot be accessed from only one source –the teacher but from other people as well.

Since music, songs and dances are in a way related to games, the next section discusses what learners and teachers think of games as another tool in teaching and learning.

### **5.5.3 Using games in learning**

In the Sesotho context a game can often only be done with a dance or a song, which is why songs and dances are considered as part of games as well. Similarly, role-plays are considered as games. Teachers use the term 'games' to include role-playing and acting. They say that if they make students act out what they read, then it becomes a game. This indicates that every thing that calls for body movement is termed a 'game'.

Both teachers and learners indicate the relevance of using games while learning languages. Games are another tool of learning with a number of benefits These are:

- games are useful for aspects in language development,
- games emphasise the use of rules,
- games can enhance knowledge, and
- games develop a range of skills.

In this activity, several of Gardner's intelligences can be seen to work simultaneously. Games consistently fit bodily with kinaesthetic intelligence. This is where learners use their bodies to express emotions. Playing games is a form of 'hands on' activity (R I C Publications 2004). Such activities include Sesotho traditional games and dances. Apart from this intelligence, musical and rhythmic intelligence is also evident, as some games require music and or dances. There is also logical-mathematical intelligence where learners have to apply their logic and thinking skills in attempting riddles and quizzes, and in understanding the

pattern and process of the 'game'. Verbal intelligence is also present as it cuts across every strategy in language classes. This can be observed working with puzzles and quizzes, which enable learners to learn new vocabulary or revise the vocabulary they already possess, either individually or as a group. This indicates that even though games are primarily considered as instructional tools, organisational strategies are also relevant because some of the games are played with other learners while some are undertaken individually. Furthermore, in Sesotho, some traditional games include dances and songs. Consequently, when playing a game, music, dance and language are used simultaneously.

As games are played, language is also included. Games require a good command of language and the ability to communicate with others. Games can further be used as a vehicle to teach certain content in both languages, making learning more fun. While using games in a wide sense like this, aims in the Educational Manifesto (Ministry of Education 1984) are relevant. Specifically education has to

*...Provide diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and roles possessed by or open to students after their secondary school course.*

*Develop and project the Basotho culture, art, and language as well as the world's cultural heritage.*

It is through games that talents and opportunities can be used in the development of respect for and awareness towards Basotho and the world's cultural heritage.

Games offer a range of skills which are vital in every-day learning and living. Cooperation is identified as an important skill to develop, and as a requirement in every-day life. Through being involved and participating in games learners develop knowledge, understanding, and come to appreciate various skills and lessons. With these newly acquired skills

- learners are able to make informed choices daily, in and out of class.

- learners abide by the rules of a particular game and they have to know and follow the rules. Notably, this skill of being able to follow rules also applies to following societal and/or moral rules.
- games, like music can be seen to assist in the development of thinking skills such as evaluation and synthesis.

Teachers and learners believe that teachers need to organise games frequently for when learners engage in games, they are acquiring skills, learning the way the game is played, and the specific vocabulary that is used in the game.

Learners themselves in their recommendations urge teachers to use games more often. They believe that as they play they also learn. Furthermore, learners perceive themselves as compelled to be more creative and to think critically as they then develop their own games suitable for their age and their era. This creativity connects to Gardner's observation that... '*Games might even be modified to suit various occasions and situations* (Gardner 1983). This indicates that teachers need to use the strategy more frequently and in differing situations. All the suggestions for further improvement highlight the importance of having and using games as a learner-centred activity. If the method is improved, learners will become more engaged in their learning. In addition, learners further express that games have to be included in teaching and in order to improve the teaching, there must be time for games in both language and literature lessons.

As games can be presented in pictures, the following section focuses on the use of pictures and drawing as another instructional tool for learning language.

#### **5.5.4 Using pictures and drawings**

The use of pictures and drawings can be linked to Gardner's (1983) spatial or visual intelligence. In this intelligence learning is gained through observing, making, and seeing visual images, which are used by the learner to help in the construction of knowledge. Linguistic and verbal intelligence underpins this approach, as it involves using a variety of communication skills in reading, writing, and speaking. Television is also included as a visual aid as programmes can be watched and later discussed, or videos can be produced and watched.

Through using video, learners can show how much they understand of whatever concept was discussed. Using all types of visuals help learners to move from concept to language, as they describe or explain what they have drawn or seen. Illustrations can also help learners to understand what they read if the pictures accompany the reading passage.

Learner-centred methods are intertwined. Games can be considered as part of visual intelligence because they are watched and looked at like pictures (R I C Publications 2004). Also, while puzzles and quizzes feature as games, and are also tools of logical and linguistic learning, they can further feature as visuals and hence fit in this intelligence. When using learner-centred strategies, learners can experience a variety of ways of learning and expressing their learning within the use of one activity.

Both learners and teachers identified the relevance of using visuals in order to learn language. Teachers reflect that learners develop important concepts when they draw what they have read, and that this helps them display their understanding of what has been taught. This may be the reason why teachers use pictures as much as they can so that they address certain aspects in language learning in order to enable learners to attain significant and meaningful knowledge. As a result of the perceived value of visual aids learners indicate that visuals are not used as often as would be appropriate. Such an observation suggests that teachers need to use the technique as often as possible so that learners can improve the way they think. All these benefits, expressed by learners and teachers, focus primarily on understanding, and putting understanding into meaningful writing. Learners are expected to draw what they understand and sometimes proceed to put that understanding into written form. Canning-Wilson (1996) indicates the relevance of visuals by outlining that through them, learners are able to gain knowledge in the following ways:

*...they draw out language from their own knowledge and personal experience and this will then allow learners to organise knowledge into semantic or associative clusters.*

*...when coupled with texts, visuals make learners think about the*

*process of the language more fully as they help individuals to make sense of surroundings in daily life.*

*...pictures can help to bring the outside world into the classroom, can create a social setting and as a result, as the learner would be immersed in learning, visuals can also make situations to appear more real, more authentic and this can help learners to use appropriate language and its structures which are highly associated with the visuals.*

Pictures and drawings assist learners to write descriptive essays and hence improve their communication skills, most importantly their writing and composing skills. Learners believe it becomes easier to write descriptively when they are also looking at the picture or drawing. This can also assist learners in developing their writing skills. In this context linguistic intelligence features, especially when learners are expected to display the use of a variety of communication skills in reading, writing and speaking. They can enhance these communication skills by using pictures and drawings. Canning-Wilson (1996), and Lin (2003) observe how visuals assist learners in language learning. They indicate that visuals

- can enhance clarity and assist learners to organise ideas more clearly.
- provide room for prediction, inference and deduction of information from a variety of sources.
- can be interpreted.

This shows the relevance of having frequent use of pictures so that learners are encouraged to think, question and make decisions.

There is a concern from the teachers' and learners' feedback that visual learning is not used often enough in classrooms in Lesotho. Learners are also denied the opportunity of making their own drawings and searching for pictures that can convey what they have in mind in relation to what they are studying. This might be due to the Sesotho culture, which does not put a lot of emphasis on drawing but on other artistic values. If the use of pictures and drawings

could be maximised it might enrich understanding on the side of the learners. Teachers, too, would be able to cover what is expected by the syllabus, as one picture or drawing can be used to explore different but connected themes or topics. Again, this suggests the possibility of using thematic instruction.

Both learners and teachers outline a number of suggestions on the improvement of teaching approaches through using visuals including digital visual images. Learners communicate awareness that if things could be done in a different way, then their learning could be enhanced. They are aware that various technologies can help them in their daily learning, and that these technologies are available to many learners beyond Lesotho. Learners have been aware of the existence of these visuals and their relevance and consequently make a range of suggestions. Teachers support them, as they believe that there is a wide learning spectrum that can be supported by the use of computer technology, use of the Internet, and the process of digitally finding information.

Even though when the study was undertaken a few schools offered computer as a subject, ICT was not then recognised by MOET. Lately, however, a number of schools are offering the subject. It is also now part of the country's policy to implement the ICT policy.

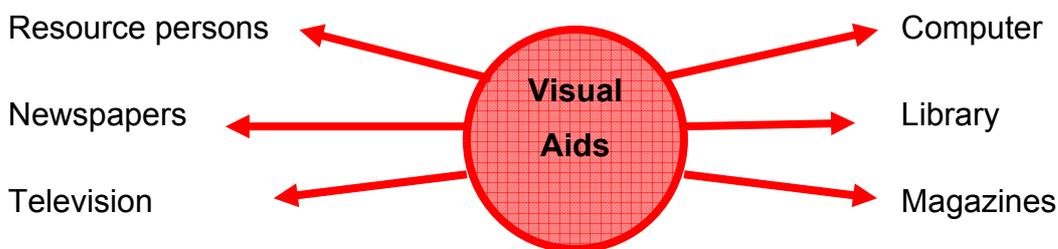
Both learners and teachers propose the following:

- in conjunction with improved teaching strategies, curriculum should be improved so that it can include studying information and communication technology as part of visuals.
- the use of magazines and newspapers should be maximised in order to support learners as they seek to improve their vocabulary and knowledge.
- both learners and teachers propose the effective use of the library. Learners believe that if libraries in their schools are equipped with various, up to date books, they can improve their knowledge. They can read with the intention of improving their vocabulary as well as finding information in their different subjects. The library can assist learners to

learn independently, individually or as a group.

- in addition to the above observation, learners argue that if there is an enforced library period in every school, this can help them improve their learning in English literature and other subjects.

Learners think critically and are observant. Learners recognise things that can be done towards improving the way they learn. They are also aware that there are some teaching materials that can be improved to make their learning more effective. The suggestions learners give indicate that they believe visual aids are both helpful and necessary. Some of the visuals suggested by learners are live, such as resource persons and things that can be seen and experienced when field trips are undertaken. With experiential learning, learners have a chance to move beyond what is represented in a picture only (Canning-Wilson 1996). This helps learners to visualise and internalise the information and consequently build knowledge about a particular item or process. Each of these includes a visual aspect and is perceived by learners as a means to improve the teaching of language in the future. These suggestions further indicate the extent to which learners have become open-minded and are ready and willing for improvement in the delivery of their education. Their suggestions can be summed up in the following diagram.



*Figure 12: Summary of suggested visual aids*

#### **5.5.5 Incorporating national and international issues**

Understanding and appreciating the learners' world is important in establishing a learner-centred classroom, as this world influences and impacts on the students as they undertake their learning. Therefore, this section considers global issues that impact upon learners in Lesotho but which are not necessarily part of the content of the curriculum.

These emerging issues are considered by the nation and world as problems for youth. Most importantly, the discussion of these issues helps youth to make informed choices, and so to develop “*a sense of commitment to national and personal priorities*” (Ministry of Education 1995). If learners are well educated about these issues, they are able to make informed decisions daily in their lives or when need arises.

Affecting learner-teacher relations is the abuse of drugs. Learners are aware that many of them take these drugs. At the end of their studies or at some time, their brain is affected so that despite all their work they do not gain anything of significance from school. This is why students suggest that during their leisure time they need to be engaged in sports or games in order to refresh their minds. Such sports or games could be in the same school or inter school, as this will help them to be away from drugs and give them a different focus. This participation in sports or games could also give them something healthy and useful to aim for rather than indulging in drugs.

Within this context, the development of life skills is one such emerging issue. Emphasis in this issue is on exercising a range of skills. The skills support learners in making judgements and decisions about priorities in their daily life. Learners see life skills as knowing how to exercise attributes that will make them better citizens and more reliable human beings in a community context. However, even in cases where life skills education is very straight forward, teachers did not emphasise them or relate them to every day life. This implies that teachers need to be equipped with more tactics and techniques as to how they can manage to infuse these prominent life issues into their daily teaching. If teachers are well equipped with these tactics, they can be in a position to use learners’ experiences and simultaneously deal with communication skills too.

Communication skills are intertwined with the life skills and learners have to use both categories of skills simultaneously. For communication skills, the findings display a clear connection to the aims of the language syllabi (Ministry of Education 2002), where learners are expected to develop adequate language skills for survival and develop confidence and communicative competence to use language in appropriate situations. Also, the Education Manifesto (Ministry of Education 1984) is well reflected in Lesotho classrooms where it suggests

that education has to

*...Inspire all students with a desire for achievement and self-improvement both at school and in later life.*

Learners highlight this in the development of various life skills, particularly those of decision-making and group participation which help them to be creative as they compose drama or songs that address emerging issues such as HIV/AIDS education, abuse in all its forms, gender equity and equality, environment and human rights. As these communication skills and life skills are essential in language learning, learners indicate that they have to practice using them daily so that they use them correctly. In this case, learners will develop appropriate skills that will assist them to master learning individually and enhance independent learning.

In order to use the skills appropriately and effectively, teachers themselves need assistance. This suggests that teacher training institutions have to train teacher trainees on how to address these emerging issues, as the issues are not only a national concern but a global one. As for those who are already in the teaching service, they need in-service training on how best to emphasise and tactfully make learners aware of such skills, encouraging them to use such skills not only in class, but also in every day life. This also suggests room for further investigation, especially into the relevance of inclusion of life skills and other emerging issues in the syllabus.

### **5.6 Additional suggestions for improvement**

The discussion here concerns additional suggested proposals that will help to improve the teaching of language and maximize the use of learner-centred teaching approach. These are suggestions for effective learning while using learner-centred strategies. These suggestions help to build a conducive environment for learning not only in languages but in other subjects too. They are enabling factors for effective learner-centred learning to take place.

In order to be able to implement any of the learner-centred strategies, the classroom as the main and basic setting has to provide a favourable environment. Most important here is the idea of what constitutes an efficient and

effective classroom environment. This applies to whether learners are working individually or as a group, whether they are acting, singing, playing games, dancing or watching and making pictures.

Learners portray a number of descriptions of a learner-friendly classroom while teachers also state it in compelling observations about managing their classes efficiently and effectively. These suggestions for improvements might be effected in future so that a learner-centred approach could be more successful and make learning language fun. These suggestions are categorised to include: learning resources, school organisation and timetabling, professional ethics and learning relationships, teacher education and professional development, learner responsibility including national and global issues.

#### **5.6.1 Learning resources**

Learners and teachers have suggestions concerning the mode of study in all subjects or the way they consider they should be taught. Learners identify that they must be taught through computers, as they indicate that they provide a wide spectrum of information. This applies to all the subjects they learn not only languages. The suggestion of implementing information communication technology across the curriculum affects the ministry (MOET) as, in most cases; the ministry is responsible for providing infrastructure. Schools require assistance from the government through the ministry to ensure that they have proper buildings to house computers. In some cases the government will also have to buy those computers.

Another learning resource is suitable facilities. It is the responsibility of the school administration to ensure that these facilities are available. This responsibility accommodates the inception of and access to computers and the Internet. As part of the responsibility, the school administration has to liaise with the ministry (MOET) in outsourcing funding for building computer classrooms and libraries.

#### **5.6.2 School organisation and timetabling**

With regard to school organisation and timetabling, most of these suggestions compel the school administration to take action so that students' learning can

be improved.

Learners and teachers suggest that teaching should not be directed by examinations. Learners suggest that teaching should not be focused on the examinations as it is currently. Shifting the focus away from examinations could help them in their learning, as they will have more time for learning. Teachers further suggest that examinations should not be held quarterly, as is the current practice, but at the end of each session/term. It is possible that teachers are prompted in this suggestion by the belief that they would have more time for teaching, just as the learners are seeking more time for learning. As exam preparation requires revision time in class, if they are written only twice a year, there would be a more substantial focus on teaching and learning time rather than revision time. This suggests that there is need to revise the number of internal examinations in a year as this would give both learners and teachers more time on their work, especially when learning in a learner-centred classroom requires adequate time for learning to take place.

Both teachers and learners have suggestions for the management of their schools. Mostly, however, they are concerned with the number of classes they have in a day, which they consider too many. Their argument is that learners become tired when they have many classes. On average a student in secondary school in Lesotho has eight or nine classes in a day, lasting for forty or forty-five minutes. Assessing the current innovations there appears to be a need for even more time because of the inclusion of ICT and other emerging issues which cannot be infused into the existing curriculum. This suggests that it could be possible to use integrated learning which would mean longer time for a class and fewer classes in a day. However, the number of classes can only be changed if the curriculum is also changed.

The school administration is responsible for the overall management of the school. This includes staffing and timetabling of the school day. Teachers suggest that there should be flexibility, which would allow for team-teaching in the same school or even inter school. If the timetable was flexible, this would help teachers explore and extend ideas from their colleagues in other schools, and as a result, improve their teaching.

Learners are also aware that their classes can be overcrowded. This concerns classroom organisation as the teacher does not get the opportunity to teach and attend to all of them. Learners propose that sometimes it is not advisable to put all learners of the same stream in one classroom as the class becomes overcrowded and learners may become unmanageable. In some schools the teacher to student ratio is very high and learners consider that teachers cannot do an effective job if the ratio is too high. In some schools the classrooms are densely packed. As a result it is not easy to move about the students, as some activities require. Yet, the learner-centred approach encourages learners' movement and engagement, physically and intellectually. Consequently, some learners are left out of the learning process. This implies that classrooms are not spacious enough to accommodate all learners or there are not enough teachers and so classes are too big. It also indicates that schools take a large enrolment while being aware that there are not adequate classrooms.

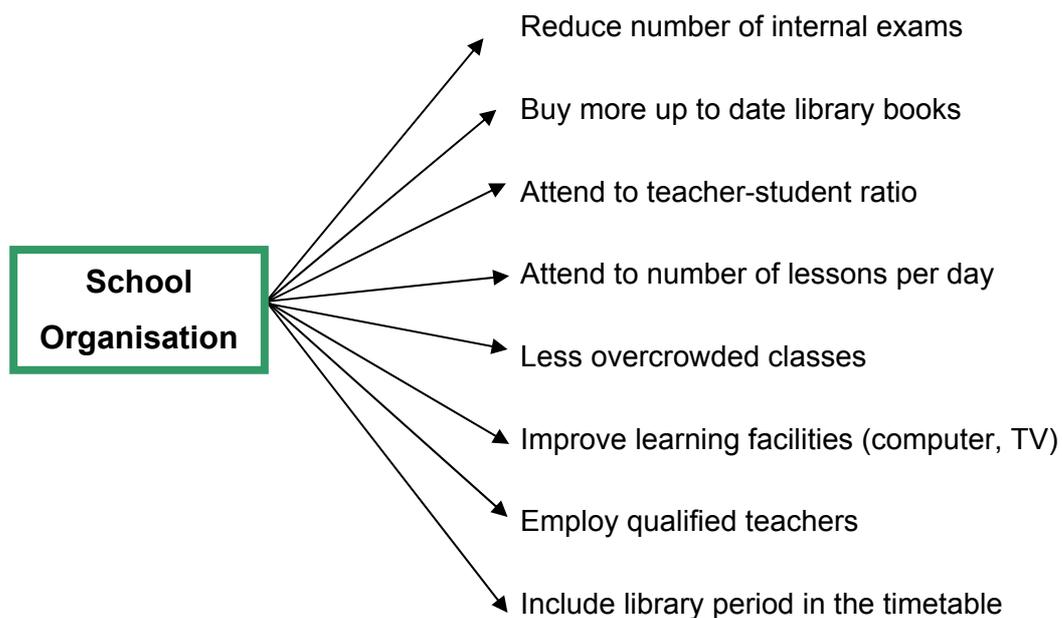
Moreover, as part of the responsibility of the school administration, qualified teachers have to be employed, so that effective teaching can take place. However, the situation in Lesotho is that there are insufficient qualified teachers; that is why in some schools, unqualified teachers are employed and then the qualified ones have to assist them so that they teach effectively. This is really a challenge, which needs to be attended to.

There is a strong suggestion that schools should have libraries and that library classes should be time-tabled. Such classes would assist learners to improve their learning in language and other subjects. This requires the attention of the school administration since, when drawing the budget it has to consider the necessary equipment for the library such as books, newspapers, magazines, the librarian and even the building if it does not already exist. Even if the learners can go to the library with their respective teachers, they still need the permanent librarian to be present as s/he may be more familiar with library procedures than teachers. Not all schools have funds to allow for such personnel. In addition to this is a suggestion that the school administration should buy more textbooks on the various teaching strategies, especially learner-centred ones, so that teachers and learners can access them for research and be able to teach more effectively and efficiently. It is indeed a challenge to teachers and principals in their schools to ensure that a library

is available and that time is allocated for it, guaranteeing every learner access to the library and equity in accessing information and education.

These suggestions are targeted to different categories and levels but all of them address education and learning. It is advisable to try to implement these suggestions in stages as they cannot be implemented all at the same time because of their differing levels of priority and relevance. Also, some suggestions need long term planning. Installing computers for instance would not be possible until the whole of the country has access to electricity. This requires schools not only to consider the availability of rooms but also the development of infrastructure.

The information above can also be summed up in the following diagram, where there are suggestions as to what the school organisation should consider in order to improve the teaching of not only languages but also of other subjects too.



*Figure 13: How should school organisation might be changed in order to carry out effective learner-centred teaching and learning.*

### 5.6.3 Professional ethics and learning relationships

Learners are very observant of teachers' behaviour and attitude towards them. They are aware that not all teachers use the learner-centred strategies in their

teaching. They say that those teachers who do not use learner-centred strategies “*spoon feed them*”. They indicate that learner-centred strategies help them learn better and make learning a lot of fun, since they are engaged and involved in building knowledge rather than being told most of the information by their teachers. According to learners, learner-centred strategies help them to be independent and open-minded in their learning.

Learners are aware of certain practices that take place at school and in their classrooms. They are aware that their teachers sometimes miss classes and they think that this hinders their learning. In some schools, because of the shortage of qualified teachers, underqualified teachers teach junior classes, and learners are also aware of this. As a result they suggest that only qualified teachers should be teaching. However, this is a problem because in Lesotho, there is a shortage of qualified teachers, which is why in some schools even unqualified<sup>2</sup> teachers have to teach. This gives room for further consideration on how to improve and increase the number of teachers who are not only qualified but also qualified to teach languages.

Attitude and behaviour can help or hinder learning. Management and control of behaviour and attitudes has to be effected by both groups involved in the learning process, teachers and learners. If learners are engaged, then good behaviour will be produced. Furthermore, learners are very observant and aware of happenings in their schools. They observe that sometimes their teachers come to class in a bad mood, and they believe that sometimes the teacher is unnecessarily angry. Such anger explains why in some cases teachers use a stick on the learners. Learners also consider that teachers need to display understanding towards their students, and that this will bring about communication among students and teachers, and reduce the number of times teachers punish learners. Some learners think that teachers should show leniency as they are teaching, while others believe that their teachers should not be lenient but strict instead. This suggests that both learners and teachers need to be aware of their attitude and behaviour towards one another. Here the

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<sup>2</sup> Qualified teachers are qualified to teach languages. However, some teachers are qualified to teach other subjects but are teaching languages, which they are not qualified for. Some teachers have content background but are not trained professional teachers. Some people without any teaching certification are teaching languages.

emotional, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences apply, as when people know themselves, they will relate with others.

Teachers also have suggestions about the way they relate to students and other teachers. They believe that

- both teachers and learners have to work cooperatively so that learning can take place
- in return each has to be polite to the other
- teachers have to be patient as they deal with learners with differing abilities.

This can be addressed by using various learner-centred strategies. As Stanford (2003) indicates, not all learners manage to learn from the same intelligence, so teachers need to use a variety of learner-centred strategies with various intelligences to offer, to suit every learner. It is probable that relations can then be managed.

#### **5.6.4 Teacher education and professional development**

The suggestions and recommendations that learners and teachers propose are not only directed to the school environment only but also to departments in the Ministry of Education and Training which are directly responsible for teacher education and professional development. These departments include: the curriculum centre, which is responsible for curriculum, the inspectorate section, which has a responsibility to follow up the curriculum already implemented in schools and to support the schools and teachers where necessary. These two sectors are also responsible for the in-servicing of teachers.

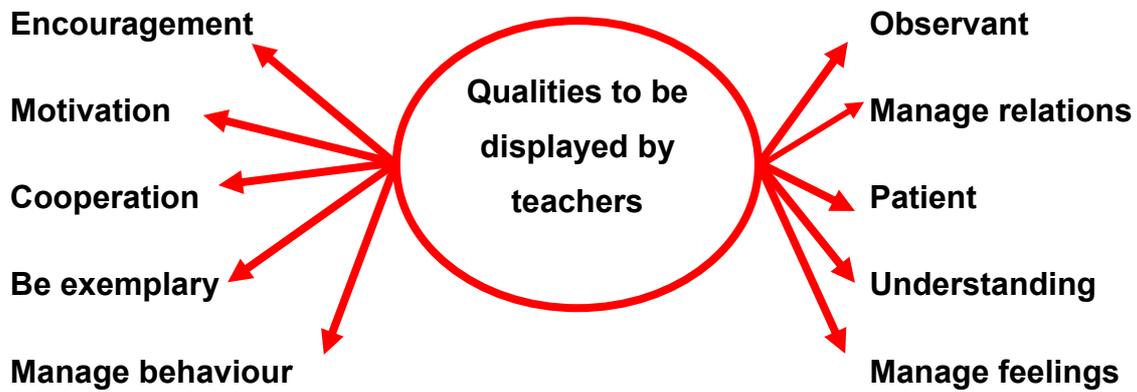
Teachers need to participate in workshops, which help them teach better so that the use of the learner-centred approach can be maximised. Teachers consider that it is advisable for them to attend local, regional and national workshops where they can share ideas with other teachers on how best to use the learner-centred strategies. It is considered that, at those workshops, demonstrations on how to use the learner-centred teaching methods be carried out so that teachers can see how the approach works. This is also a positive suggestion as

in this kind of workshop most of the teachers are present. When there is a demonstration they will be able to apply it in their respective school if they grasped what was demonstrated. They also suggest that teachers who perform well should be recognised and have their effort acknowledged. Those teachers, who are failing to use the learner-centred strategies should be given a task to present to the other teachers as a way of training them, so that they become familiar and confident with the learner-centred methods. It is anticipated that in future these teachers would then be able to use learner-centred strategies, even when they are alone. These workshops can be run either by the teachers' subject associations or the government (MOET). Learners and teachers also suggest that these kind of workshops have to be held as often as possible so that teachers can be equipped with the latest learner-centred teaching methods. It is not only teachers who are already teaching who would benefit from these workshops, but also the beginning teachers too. This observation further implies that teachers may need to be motivated, so that they can then motivate their learners.

Another vital department is that of teacher training, whose mandate is to train qualified teachers who are ultimately expected to teach in schools using the learner-centred activities they were equipped with when they were being trained. This is currently the responsibility of the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and the Lesotho College of Education (LCE).

Teachers propose that teacher trainees need to be equipped with a variety of teaching methods including learner-centred strategies. When these teachers come to the classroom they will then be able to use such strategies effectively and creatively. It is the responsibility of teacher trainers to ensure that student teachers are equipped with these vital skills and ethics.

The suggestions ask for teachers to possess or be equipped with certain qualities that are needed in the teaching profession. These qualities can be summarised in this figure.



*Figure 14: Summary of skills that teachers need to demonstrate when using the learner-centred approach*

#### 5.6.5 Learner responsibility

In this section learners put forward suggestions about themselves, since they are aware that they also need to improve, and are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Through knowing themselves, learners become motivated and manage to learn independently.

Learners propose a number of suggestions about themselves. Their suggestions are listed here.

- Learners relations with their teachers need to be improved. The relationship between teacher and learner is ideally seen as one of trust, cooperation and understanding.
- Within this concept of relationships, learners acknowledge that they have to behave well towards their teachers and towards other learners. Such respect is expected to be reciprocal.
- Learners indicate that when teachers are polite to them, there is not going to be any misunderstanding; hence cooperation and communication will follow.
- Learners need to have special time set aside for their work and to seek assistance if need be; they support this by arguing that they have to be brave enough to ask for clarification when they do not understand and to have extra classes outside regular school time.

- Some learners are afraid to speak because they are afraid to make mistakes. Learners recognise that they should not just keep quiet, as the teacher might think that when they are silent they understand everything, while that is not necessarily the case.
- Other learners argue that to err is human, so they should feel alright about making mistakes so that they can be corrected. As a result, they will know the correct thing.
- Learners need to participate in every day class activities and in debates where they have a chance to improve their language and learn more. However, students must feel confident enough to participate. By speaking and participating in class learners gain both knowledge and skills.
- In order for effective learning to take place learners have to be given the independence of studying individually or in groups. In groups they have to be cooperative with other learners. This can happen through projects where they display their investigative, decision-making and creative skills.
- Learners are also mindful of their culture and they want to be productive in their traditional handcrafts, which will help them to appreciate their culture better.
- Learners indicate the need to participate in sports during their leisure time. They suggest that this participation might help them to avoid drug abuse.

This demonstrates that learners are very observant and they think critically about their learning environment and learning processes. Their thinking is consistent with the national aims, whose focus is

*...To ensure permanent and functional literacy in Sesotho and English, and basic numeracy as a foundation for further learning and effective living...*

*...To provide suitable opportunities for a variety of practical and*

*creative activities aimed at personal development and in particular, the growth of positive attitudes to work. (Ministry of Education 1992)*

The following figure provides a summary of what learners believe they require for effective learning.



*Figure 15: Expected improvement from learners*

All these propositions on the way of preparing for teaching indicate that with the use of various facilities, resources and knowledge, teachers will use appropriate learner-centred strategies which will suit the kind of learners they teach and produce the kind of learners the nation wants. It is also advisable for teachers to obtain help from others in workshops. Concluding remarks and recommendations will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

This study has explored how the learner-centred approach is perceived and used in Lesotho. The issues emerging from the study include: the range of available learner-centred teaching strategies and the benefits of using these activities in learning languages; learners' language preferences; skills emphasised as the learner-centred approach is used; emerging issues of national and global concern and how these are addressed through using the learner-centred approach. Finally, suggestions on how to improve the learner-centred approach in the future are addressed.

### **6.1 Learner-centred teaching and learning strategies**

A number of conclusions can be drawn concerning learners' language preferences. Most learners opt for English as their preferred language, and a few for Sesotho. Learners are aware of the relevance of studying and knowing English because it is a subject that is compulsory to pass and is the medium of instruction for all other subjects. Learners also highlight the significance of learning Sesotho, particularly for cultural reasons. They are also motivated to learn and improve their language skill for other perceived benefits. Learners see teachers as having vital responsibilities in supporting them to acquire language skills and this leads to a changing role for teachers. In the learner-centred approach teachers need to display a range of roles such as being: role models, motivators, supporters, facilitators, and relation managers. This is quite different from the teacher-centred approach where the teacher is the conveyer of information to the class. Teachers' engagement with learners and display of various roles can assist learners to achieve in their endeavours to use both languages accurately in a range of life contexts.

A range of learner-centred strategies is used to promote language learning. There are a number of benefits for using this learner-centred teaching and learning activity. As the findings unfold, one concludes that the learner-centred approach can provide a number of significant guidelines. These include

- while learners are having fun they are engaged in the activities, resulting in more learning occurring

- a number of skills are developed including language skills and life skills. These include being creative, developing confidence and independence; general and cultural knowledge is gained
- most importantly, relationships are developed.

All of these lessons are achieved by focusing on language content and community building, and are not for use in the classroom only but also for the rest of learners' lives.

Using the learner-centred teaching approach allows learners of different abilities to work together and promotes the building of knowledge. The literature indicates the main purpose of having learner-centred teaching strategies is to help learners to work cooperatively in pairs or as a group and to build their own knowledge rather than being given such knowledge. In this way, the approach is trying to discourage competition but fosters team and group work. Most importantly, group or whole class learning aids in the development of social skills such as communication, presentation, problem-solving leadership, delegation and organisation. These skills are very significant in life. It is therefore imperative to use pair or group work in a manner that learners will benefit from. In working together, learners support each other while at the same time they learn and share ideas and experiences, which are informative to other group members. They are further accountable as a group or pair or even as an individual for what takes place. This fosters group and individual responsibility, group interdependence and individual independence. While learning in these circumstances, learners are not only learning for examination purposes but they acquire knowledge and skills for their entire lives.

While various learner-centred methods are used, teachers note that learners are very observant, as they are able to detect the overlaps in content and ideas before the teacher can outline them. Because of the language learning policies, teachers have begun to make a connection of learner-centred strategies to teaching and cultural heritage. Using the learner-centred approach produces learners who can work in a variety of environments, in pairs, groups and independently, and who can build knowledge and understanding by connecting learning from different contexts. This leads to a conclusion that using a variety

of these methods, coupled with discussion, is helpful in daily learning.

When using learner-centred strategies as an instructional or organisational tool, past experience and knowledge play an important role. Learners are able to make connections and, as a result, build new knowledge from their already existing experience. Previous experience also helps learners to be open, to see similarities, to draw from what they already know and to connect it to the new knowledge so that they can see the relationships and try to work on them, changing or improving. This past knowledge is not only from learners but from teachers also. This leads to the conclusion that as teachers undertake thorough preparation for the lesson, they will be able to assess what types of previous experience can be relevant in a lesson. Teachers need to be selective in which teaching strategies would be most suitable to help students make meaningful learning by drawing from earlier experiences. When planning, teachers need to be mindful of appropriate learner-centred strategies and the way they correspond to multiple intelligences. This further suggests that teacher training needs to enforce the use of past experience as critical in the learning process.

The findings show that a number of learner-centred methods are being used, as the syllabi require. Not only are the methods suggested in the syllabus employed, but teachers also bring along additional ones. This needs to be applauded as teachers display their ability and creativity so that they can make learning fun, interesting, and enjoyable to their students. This also helps teachers to attain expected syllabus coverage when using these learner-centred strategies. Certainly, a syllabus is just a guide; it gives room for teachers' creativity. In particular, this teacher initiative is a reflection of the literature, which states that students learn best when their teachers know them as individuals, and their teachers develop lessons with individual student needs in mind.

Even though the literature suggests a range of learner-centred methods, learners and teachers in their responses do not mention some of them. These are thematic instruction and the use of graphic designs. Graphic designs, even though they are considered to be mathematical, can still be applicable in language. These can be used to show some grammatical structures, such as parts of speech using the Venn diagram, the web or the table. Similarly,

thematic instruction can be effectively used in language learning, covering the study of global and emerging issues, literature, media and culture. The probable conclusion is that teachers are not aware of these strategies. It would be desirable to assist teachers to try to understand these methods so that they can apply them. It is one's strong belief that with intensive in-servicing through workshops, teachers will use these various learner-centred teaching methods. It is worth noting that if something is manifested in language, it is easily transferred to another discipline.

The learner-centred approach gives learners the opportunity to engage with those emerging issues that interest and challenge them, and which they must deal with throughout their lives. These are emerging issues such as HIV/AIDS, abuse in all its forms, gender equity and equality, and the environment. These various issues can be integrated and treated well using thematic instruction. Integrated learning can be employed and issues can be integrated when studying a certain language concept and structure, and the use of language, whether it is in English or Sesotho. Therefore, teachers need to be assisted to develop an understanding of these methods of learning and teaching so that they can put them to efficient use. There is an implication that more work is required in connection with which learner-centred strategies are used and how they can be employed in order to promote effective learning.

Learners are expected to be able to demonstrate a high level of social working relations and cooperation. Through working together in groups or in pairs they develop social skills which will assist in gaining knowledge in the classroom and later in life. One can conclude that the teacher training department has a challenge in ensuring that teachers are fully equipped with the variety of learner-centred teaching strategies so that teachers use them effectively and efficiently while teaching. This does not put aside the creativity that individual teachers can display, since not all the learner-centred methods are discussed here; there is room for additional ones. However, it does suggest that teachers should be taught and supported to use their initiative to develop the best learner-centred strategies for their classes.

Furthermore, learners need to take their work more seriously and this calls for mutual responsibility in the learning process. Such responsibility leads to

individual and independent learning where learners are accountable for their learning. This accountability highlights a number of skills; awareness leads to independence, and then self-confidence and decision-making will follow. The presence of the teacher while the class is in operation is crucial, as the monitoring of that lesson will inform where and when to reinforce or assist learners. In this manner teachers, through knowing learners' strengths and weaknesses are equipped to help them accordingly. This suggests that teachers have to plan their lessons well so that they can choose teaching strategies that will enable effective learning. These methods will then require learners' involvement, which in some cases might lead to being more inquisitive. As a result learners will undertake to do things on their own, demonstrating independent learning responsibility.

Learners state that, as much as they like using the recognised learner-centred strategies, they also need to study individually. This could lead to the conclusion that learners consider working alone as learner-centred too. Even when working as a group and engaged in the other learner-centred methods, learners feel a need to internalise what they have learned from others. They believe this will improve their self-confidence, assertiveness and decision-making skills. During examinations learners have to be by themselves, and so need a developed sense of their own strengths. Even in pair or group work, learners need to come along with individual knowledge so that they contribute to the greater knowledge of the group. This indicates that when learner-centred strategies are used, teachers need to consider time for the learner to work individually when doing their lesson preparation.

Drama, as another learner-centred teaching activity, leads to a number of conclusions. Sometimes teachers consider drama to be time-consuming. However, learners reflections on their learning opportunities in drama, role-play and simulation, suggest that these should be used as frequently as possible. Time taken for the whole activity can be minimised by giving learners different sub-tasks that build the whole task. In this way every body participates, significant work is done in a lesser time, and learners develop skills in interpersonal relationships. Again, the possibility for further inquiry exists in this area. Teachers do not use drama or role-play as often as possible, although

learners perceive it as offering valuable learning opportunities.

Using songs, music and dances introduces students to cultural information and characteristics; and helps learners to develop and strengthen oral skills and reading skills by learning new vocabulary in songs. These songs, music and dances can be cultural or modern as stated in the national aims with regard to Sesotho culture and other cultures. Teachers therefore have to let students engage in songs, music and dances especially in the Sesotho culture where dance and music are not separate entities. In doing so, learners will appreciate their cultural heritage better. If teachers can make a good selection of the songs that are rich in language structures and vocabulary, learners will learn the cultural songs and dances too. Composing songs and music assists learners in composing poems as well. This suggests that using songs and music is two-fold, as learners can learn old songs; they can also compose new ones or can even adapt certain songs to a prevailing situation. This underpins their relevance as a tool for engaging learners in important topics of study.

For games, which offer rich general and cultural knowledge, certain conclusions are put forward. In addition to fun, games help in building better social relationships and give each learner greater support when required. This leads to a conclusion that, like other learner-centred methods, games are very educative and should be used as frequently as possible. Apart from learners having fun and learning games, learners will acquire relevant language for the particular game and in some cases learners demonstrate creativity by composing new games that are relevant and suitable to their era, using the current resources. These games are relevant for both Sesotho and English but most importantly for Sesotho because many of these games have strong cultural connections. Through games learners can know and appreciate their culture while at the same time learning about it. Teachers need to give learners an opportunity to be creative as this will help them into the future.

Another conclusion is that by applying learner-centred strategies to teaching it is possible to produce a multiple intelligence classroom which work towards the needs of a range of learners. This means that the learner-centred methods can be integrated, varied or modified so that effective learning takes place. For instance, when using riddles, learners can draw the answer to the riddle or even

draw the question itself. This will assist learners to understand better the process displayed in the riddle and its answer. This use of visual images enhances student learning by offering different ways through which learners can access, interpret and communicate information. It is advisable that teachers make or provide a variety of visuals, and also encourage learners to produce visuals. For instance, after reading passages in literature texts, learners can draw what they understood from the read passages or can role-play or simulate what they have read. Apart from that, learners can also act a drama, which they can either compose, or base on a genre they are reading. In doing so, they will understand the text better while learning it in an interesting manner.

The learner-centred approach produces learners that are fully engaged, learners that manage themselves and others, learners that use social skills, learners that think creatively to solve problems and learners that possess independence skills. As they do all these things learners have to be aware and knowledgeable of their culture and other cultures. These qualities of learner-centredness are reflected in the constitution and educational aims in Lesotho. All are aiming at developing and producing independent citizens who know how to relate with others under any circumstance. This brings a conclusion that teachers need to use the learner-centred approach as expected in order to achieve this. The education system also has to assist teachers in ensuring that most of the learning resources and facilities are in place so that teachers can do their job effectively. Government priorities for education cannot be met without greater resources of equipment, teachers, and infrastructure such as electricity and buildings.

Learners' and teachers' perceptions concerning learner-centred teaching strategies can be symbolised and summarized by using a tree as a metaphor. The roots stand for past experience, the trunk or stump resembles interpersonal, intrapersonal and emotional intelligences as they are explored through the learner-centred strategies. Then, the branches and the leaves resemble the other learner-centred strategies that are mostly concerned with delivering the content. These branches in some cases are intertwined. This shows a strong relationship and interdependence among the learner-centred teaching methods and the intelligences. The branches could also stand for the

different levels of knowledge and skills that can be offered by each learner-centred activity.

## **6.2 Skills from the learner-centred methods**

A wide range of skills are acquired and developed from the use of the learner-centred approach yet the content of language learning does not necessarily involve these language learning skills. Rather, they need to be explicitly included as compulsory and additional content. In this way teachers will be compelled to teach them so that learners can use them in class and for life. Learners also relate that they apply these skills when learning other subjects. Therefore this approach also encourages an idea of “life-long learning”, which fits with the education policy and is expressed by the learners themselves as a valuable side effect of learner-centred strategies. This leads to the conclusion that teachers need to be emphasising these skills in daily language lessons.

Currently, inadequate emphasis is placed on skills. Teachers need to be assisted to effectively and efficiently place emphasis on skills acquisition. This calls for a number of interventions to be in place. First of all the teacher training centres should put emphasis on this so that teacher trainees are aware and they know that they have to encourage learners to use these skills as often as possible. Secondly, those teachers who are already teaching need to be assisted through workshops to understand how they can encourage maximum use of life skills. In some cases manuals or notes, which have infused the skills into language content learning, could be prepared. Third, textbooks used in schools should also have activities that encourage the application of these skills so that learners can practise the use of the skills at the same time as they are learning. Fourth, the syllabus needs to spell out the depth and breadth of skills to be emphasised.

In using the learner-centred strategies learners state that they like and appreciate what and how they learn. They value sharing their knowledge with others, they can practice their communication skills freely and, in some cases they are able to study independently. By working in different ways they see that they can build a range of skills they need as individuals. The skills include: independence, self confidence, decision-making, being self-reliant, self-

assurance, being self-contained, self-trusting, assertiveness, boldness, self-esteem, self-determination and taking responsibility for one's own actions. These skills are essential not only in the classroom environment, but daily in and out of school. Once the skills are well founded there is no chance of erasing them. Even if they are overlooked and forgotten they can be resuscitated.

While using skills, whether being for communication or for life, one can conclude that practice is the best teacher. If learners are encouraged and motivated to use the skills as often as possible, they will use them every time need arises, be it in the classroom or out of it, even for the rest of their lives.

### **6.3 Addressing national and international emerging issues**

Teachers do touch on these issues as they are teaching even though they are not a requirement from the syllabus. These are emerging issues such as HIV/AIDS, abuse in all its forms, gender equity and equality, and environment. One concludes that teachers' efforts in addressing the emerging issues is minimal and therefore they need a backup in the form of in-servicing which will assist them on how best to include the issues in their teaching. Also, the textbooks used in language classrooms need to include these issues so that teachers can address them. Furthermore, it would be advisable to include these issues in the syllabus as all teachers will be compelled to teach them. Presently, these issues are only addressed coincidentally as teachers and learners come across them.

### **6.4 Future improvements in language teaching and learning**

The conclusions in this section are based on recommendations for the different learner-centred strategies, the teaching and training of teachers, and addressing skills and emerging issues.

Regarding the use of different learner-centred strategies, three conclusions can be made. Firstly, in order to implement the learner-centred policy well, teachers have to be cooperative, not only as language teachers, but with all the teachers in a school, in the region, in the district and in the whole country. By doing so, they will undertake team teaching, assist each other as need arises and build relations among themselves as teachers.

The second conclusion concerns the importance and relevance of language as an instructional tool for learning other subjects. All teachers have to acknowledge the fact that as they teach their respective content they are also teaching language. Therefore teachers can use learner-centred strategies in all subjects and not think that learner-centred strategies are only effective for languages. Thematic instruction, graphic designs and other established learner-centred strategies could be used in an integrated manner. Teachers need to emphasise the importance of language as through language, knowledge can be transferred to other subject areas.

Finally, while using these learner-centred methods, both teachers and learners have to be aware that they work with a number of multiple intelligences. Learners will not all have the same responses or learn through the same intelligences. However, the verbal intelligence intersects all other intelligences. This also confirms that language is a tool for every activity and it is important to stress the correct use of communication and life skills. Even so, learner-centred strategies produce learners who are strong in interpersonal, intrapersonal and emotional intelligences.

In relation to the teaching and training of teachers, it is evident that teacher training has to emphasise and seriously work on developing and equipping teacher trainees with a variety of teaching methods including learner-centred ones. These methods suggested in the current syllabi are not exhaustive; there can be additional ones. This provides room for further consideration, and also rings a warning bell that teacher training institutes need to review the ways that teachers are trained, so that teachers are fully equipped with necessary teaching strategies. This also gives room for further investigation into which other strategies can be used in the light of achieving the learner-centred policy.

During teacher training certain skills, especially those associated with dealing with emerging national and global issues, have to be instilled, as they are pertinent in lifelong learning. These include life skills, research skills, investigative and interview skills, debate skills and, more importantly in the world today, the use of computer skills. If these skills are part of the curriculum by the end of their training, student teachers will be able to use them when they get to schools. This practice and knowledge will help them to give authentic

examples to learners so that they can gain better understanding and proper use of such skills. Learners will then apply those skills as need arises. Teacher institutions also need to teach via learner-centred teaching strategies so that teachers learn by doing and experiencing.

If these prominent skills are well emphasised learners will be able to use them in relation to these emerging issues. There is a strong responsibility on the MOET departments to ensure that teachers are assisted with techniques of infusing into their teaching these issues as they teach the current content in the syllabi. This infusion through the learner-centred approach to education will bring sustainable education in young learners, which is not only for the classroom and the examination but also for the rest of their lives.

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# Appendices



## Appendix A: Consent forms

Consent Form for Teachers Involved in the Research

### CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I,.....

of.....

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate as outlined in the “information to participants” in the study entitled:

Investigating the learner-centred approach in language teaching in Lesotho.

being conducted at Victoria University of Technology by:

‘Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau (student researcher) and

Mary-Rose McLaren (Principal Supervisor)

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by:

‘Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau

and that I freely consent to participation involving the following procedures:

- Classroom observation
- Survey questionnaires
- Focused discussion

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and

that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

▪ Signed:..... }                      Date: .....

Witness other than the researcher:.....}

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Name: 'Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau, ph. 61399194253/ 26622312923 or Mary-Rose McLaren, ph. 61399193254). If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee,

Consent Form for Principals whose schools are involved in the Research

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I, .....

of.....

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to learners to participate as outlined in the “information to participants” and I will sign this form on behalf of their parents, this is in the study entitled:

Investigating the learner-centred approach in language teaching in Lesotho.

being conducted at Victoria University of Technology by:

‘Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau (student researcher) and Mary-Rose McLaren (Principal Supervisor)

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by:

‘Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau

and that I freely consent to participation involving the following procedures:

- Classroom observation
- Survey questionnaires
- Focused discussion

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: ..... }

Witness other than the researcher: .....}      Date: .....

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Name: 'Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau, ph. 61399194253/ 26622312923 or Mary-Rose McLaren, ph. 61399193254). If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee,

## Appendix B: Information to participants



Information to the teachers involved in classroom observation, survey questionnaires and focused discussion

My name is 'Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau and I am the curriculum developer of Sesotho language at the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) in Lesotho. I am undertaking a Master of Education degree with Victoria University of Technology in Australia and I wish to invite your school to take part in a research project as part of my studies. Permission to conduct this has been given by the Principal Secretary on behalf of the Ministry of Education in Lesotho.

The research project aims to investigate the current strategies used in the teaching of Sesotho and English languages. I want to investigate the teachers' and learners' perceptions of the approaches, the benefit of using the approach, and what can be done to encourage more teachers to use the approach. I also want to identify other learner-centred methods that can be recommended in order to improve language teaching. This will therefore increase and improve the use of the learner-centred approach in all secondary schools in Lesotho.

Data will be collected from five participating schools and the teachers and learners will be the primary source of information. The participating schools are the schools where teachers and learners have demonstrated a commitment to the implementation of the learner-centred policy. In order to get relevant information to answer the research questions, there will be classroom observations in the participating schools. In Form B 2 classes will be observed, one for Sesotho and another for English, and this will be repeated in Form D. These observations will give first hand information about the actual learner-centred methods used, how they are applied, what skills are acquired and the behaviour of teachers and learners in the particular lesson. An observation schedule is going to be used in order to record the events in the observed class. A copy of this schedule is

Then, separate survey questionnaires for both the teachers and for the learners are to be distributed. Two teachers from each school are to respond to the survey questionnaires, this includes a teacher for Sesotho and another teacher for English. In some cases it might be one teacher who is teaching both languages and in that case there will be one respondent for that school. Six learners will also be asked to respond to a survey questionnaire. This will include three learners from (Form B and three from the Form D.

Following the classroom observations and the survey questionnaires, focused discussions will also be undertaken. The same teachers who have participated in the classroom observations and responded to the questionnaire will be invited to discuss the salient, emerging cross-school themes. This will help in obtaining accuracy in the information by taking back the themes to teachers for verification and refinement.

It is anticipated that the study will be conducted from September 2004 – November 2005. Your school's participation in this study is voluntary. Data gathered from this study will remain confidential in order to safeguard the participating schools. Participating schools can withdraw from the study at any time and counselling will be available from the Ministry of Education if the need arises.

It is my belief that your participation will benefit all Lesotho secondary schools in improving the use of strategies in the teaching of languages in Lesotho as well as policy makers and the Ministry of Education as a whole.

*Regards, 'Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau*

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Name: 'Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau, ph. 61399194253/ 26622312923 or Mary-Rose McLaren, ph. 61399193254 ) If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, 8001 (telephone no: 03-99194710

## **Appendix C: Information to Principals**

My name is 'Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau and I am the curriculum developer of Sesotho language at the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) in Lesotho. I am undertaking a Master of Education degree with Victoria University of Technology in Australia and I wish to invite your school to take part in a research project as part of my studies. Permission to conduct this study has been given by the Principal Secretary on behalf of the Ministry of Education in Lesotho.

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Data will be collected from five participating schools and the teachers and learners will be the primary source of information. The participating schools are the schools where teachers and learners have demonstrated a commitment to the implementation of the learner-centred policy. In order to get relevant information to answer the research questions, there will be classroom observations in the participating schools. In Form B 2 classes will be observed, one for Sesotho and another for English, and this will be repeated in Form D. These observations will give first hand information about the actual learner-centred methods used, how they are applied, what skills are acquired and the behaviour of teachers and learners in the particular lesson. An observation schedule is going to be used in order to record the events in the observed class. A copy of this schedule is attached.

Then, separate survey questionnaires for both the teachers and for the learners are to be distributed. Two teachers from each school are to respond to the

survey questionnaires, this includes a teacher for Sesotho and another teacher for English. In some cases it might be one teacher who is teaching both languages and in that case there will be one respondent for that school. Six learners will also be asked to respond to a survey questionnaire. This will include three learners from (Form B and three from the Form D.

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It is anticipated that the study will be conducted from September 2004 – November 2005. Your school's participation in this study is voluntary. Data gathered from this study will remain confidential in order to safeguard the participating schools. Participating schools can withdraw from the study at any time and counselling will be available from the Ministry of Education if the need arises.

It is my belief that your school's participation will assist all Lesotho secondary schools to improve the use of strategies in the teaching of languages in as well as assisting policy makers and the Ministry of Education as a whole. If your school agrees to participate that you will sign a consent form that your school participates in the exercise and also sign for the students on behalf of their parents. In this regard, you are kindly expected to notify the teachers and the learners about this important activity.

*'Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau*

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Name: 'Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau, ph. 61399194253/ 26622312923 or Mary-Rose McLaren, ph. 61399193254). If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MCMC, Melbourne, 8001 (telephone no: 03-9919 4710

Information to learners who will be involved in the survey  
and classroom observations

My name is 'Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau and I am the curriculum developer of Sesotho language at the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) in Lesotho. I am undertaking a Master of Education degree with Victoria University of Technology in Australia and I wish to invite your school to take part in a research project as part of my studies. Permission to conduct this study has been given by the Principal Secretary on behalf of the Ministry of Education in Lesotho.

The research project aims to investigate the current strategies used in the teaching of Sesotho and English languages. I want to investigate the teachers' and learners' perceptions of the approaches, the benefit of using the approach, and what can be done to encourage more teachers to use the approach. I also want to identify other learner-centred methods that can be recommended in order to improve language teaching. This will therefore increase and improve the use of the learner-centred approach in all secondary schools in Lesotho.

Data will be collected from five participating schools and the teachers and learners will be the primary source of information. The participating schools are the schools where teachers and learners have demonstrated a commitment to the implementation of the learner-centred policy. In order to get relevant information to answer the research questions, there will be classroom observations in the participating schools. In Form B 2 classes will be observed, one for Sesotho and another for English, and this will be repeated in Form D. These observations will give first hand information about the actual learner-centred methods used, how they are applied, what skills are acquired and the behaviour of teachers and learners in the particular lesson. An observation schedule is going to be used in order to record the events in the observed class. A copy of this schedule is attached.

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Following the classroom observations and the survey questionnaires, focused discussions will also be undertaken. The same teachers who have participated in the classroom observations and responded to the questionnaire will be invited to discuss the salient, emerging cross-school themes. This will help in obtaining accuracy in the information by taking back the themes to teachers for verification and refinement.

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It is my belief that your school's participation will assist all Lesotho secondary schools to improve the use of strategies in the teaching of languages in as well as assisting policy makers and the Ministry of Education as a whole.

*'Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau*

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Name: 'Mamonaheng Amelia Matsau, ph. 61399194253/26622312923 or Mary-Rose McLaren, ph. 61399193254). If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MCMC, Melbourne, 8001 (telephone no: 03-9919 4710

## Appendix D: Observation schedule

### Investigating the learner-centred approach in language teaching in Lesotho

School:  
 Class:  
 Class size:  
 Date:  
 Time:  
 Subject:  
 Activity:  
 Topic:

<b>Strategies</b>		<b>Notes</b>
Whole class working together (interpersonal)		
Group work/ pairs (interpersonal)		
Work alone (intrapersonal)		
Pictures/ art work/ design/ drawing (visual/spatial)		
Drama/ Simulation/ role-play (body-kinaesthetic)		
Games/ puzzles (logical/ mathematical)		
Songs/ music (aural/ musical)		
Cultural/ naturalistic		<b>Notes</b>
<b>Roles/behaviour--- Teacher</b>		
Asks questions of varying types		
Provides information		
Introduces & explains new ideas/ topic		
Listens/ responds		
Facilitates the discussion		
Gives feedback		
Guides the learners		
Provokes students to explore/ further discussion		
Monitors the reasoning in arguments		
Moderates the reasoning process		
Supports and encourage learners		
Links topic to past experience		
Addresses emerging issues		

<b>Roles/ behaviour—Learners' participation</b>		<b>Notes</b>
Ask questions/ Seek clarification		
Responds to questions		
Help other students		
Keeps time		
Observes others		
Makes choices/ decisions		
Acts in a motivated way		
Takes a lead in a given activity		
Interacts within a group		
Dependent on the group members		
<b>Skills and knowledge addressed</b>		<b>Notes</b> e.g. skills: cooperation, trust, caring, openness, decision-making
Life skills		
What life skills are addressed?		
Life skills discussed/emphasised/done with awareness		
Already planned for OR Dealt with incidentally		
<b>Communication skills</b>		<b>Notes</b>
Reading: assigned work, reading for pleasure...		
Writing: creative writing, taking notes...		
Listening: to teacher, to group members...		
Speaking: Presenting facts, ideas, opinions, plays, reporting, presenting home work...		

## Appendix E: Survey questionnaires

### Learners

Investigating the learner-centred approach in language teaching in Lesotho

Please answer the following questions either by circling or writing in full.

1. In what class are you?

( ) B

( ) D

2. Of these language subjects that you study, English and Sesotho, which one do you like?

.....

3. Why do you like the language you chose in 3 best?

.....

.....

### Teaching methods

4. What teaching methods does your teacher mostly use in the teaching of language.

#### For Sesotho:

( ) A. Games

( ) B. Group work

( ) C. Working in pairs

( ) D. Working alone

( ) E. Drama

( ) F. Pictures/ drawing

( ) G. Puzzles

( ) H. Songs/ music

#### For English:

( ) A. games

( ) B. group work

( ) C. working in pairs

( ) D. working alone

( ) E. drama

( ) F. pictures/ drawing

( ) G. puzzles

( ) H. songs/ music

5. If there are other teaching methods not on the list, name 3 for each language.

#### For Sesotho

(a).....

(b).....

(c).....

#### For English

(a).....

(b).....

(c).....

6. Of the teaching methods you mentioned in 4 and 5, which one do you like best?

.....

7. Why do you like this method best?

.....

.....

8. Which methods do you think help you learn best?

.....  
.....  
.....

9. Why do you think these methods help you learn best?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Using games in learning**

10. How often do you use games in your class?

- ( ) A. Every day of the week
- ( ) B. Once a week
- ( ) C. Once a month
- ( ) D. Once a session
- ( ) E. Never

11. Name 3 games that your teacher has used in:

**Sesotho:** .....,  
.....  
**English:** ....., .....,  
.....

12. Name three (3) of the games you take part in:

<b>For Sesotho:</b>	<b>For English:</b>
(a).....	(a).....
(b).....	(b).....
(c).....	(c).....

13. From the listed skills, which ones have you learned from these games?

Please tick.

- ( ) A. Cooperation
- ( ) B. Trust
- ( ) C. Caring
- ( ) D. Openness
- ( ) E. Decision-making
- ( ) F. All of the above
- ( ) G. None
- ( ) H. Others (specify them) ....., ....., .....

14. Of the skills you mentioned in 13 name three that you use mostly in your life.

.....

15. What did you learn from these games?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Group work**

16. How often do you work in groups in your class?

- ( ) A. Every day of the week
- ( ) B. Once a week
- ( ) C. Once a month
- ( ) D. Once a session
- ( ) E. Never

17. What roles did you take up in your group?

.....  
.....  
.....

18. How do you relate to each other in your group?

.....  
.....  
.....

19. From the listed skills, which ones have you learned from the group work?

Please tick.

- ( ) A. Cooperation
- ( ) B. Trust
- ( ) C. Caring
- ( ) D. Openness
- ( ) E. Decision-making
- ( ) F. All of the above
- ( ) G. None
- ( ) H. Others (specify them) ....., ....., .....

20. What did you learn from your group members?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Drama**

21. How often do you use drama/ role-play in your class?

- ( ) A. Every day of the week
- ( ) B. Once a week
- ( ) C. Once a month
- ( ) D. Once a session
- ( ) E. Never

22. What roles did you take up in the drama/ role-play?

.....  
.....  
.....

23. Name 3 dramas/ role-plays that you took part in.

.....  
.....

.....  
24. From the listed skills, which ones have you learned from the drama/ role-play? Please tick.

- ( ) A. Cooperation
- ( ) B. Trust
- ( ) C. Caring
- ( ) D. Openness
- ( ) E. Decision-making
- ( ) F. All of the above
- ( ) G. None
- ( ) H. Others (specify them) ....., ....., .....

25. What did you learn from these dramas/ role-plays?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Pictures/ drawing**

26. How often do you use pictures/ drawings in your class?

- ( ) A. Every day of the week
- ( ) B. Once a week
- ( ) C. Once a month
- ( ) D. Once a session
- ( ) E. Never

27. From the listed skills, which ones have you learned from the pictures/ drawings? Please tick.

- ( ) A. Cooperation
- ( ) B. Trust
- ( ) C. Caring
- ( ) D. Openness
- ( ) E. Decision-making
- ( ) F. All of the above
- ( ) G. None
- ( ) H. Others (specify them) ....., ....., .....

28. What did you learn from these pictures/ drawings?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Songs/ music**

29. How often do you use songs/ music in your class?

- ( ) A. Every day of the week
- ( ) B. Once a week
- ( ) C. Once a month
- ( ) D. Once a session
- ( ) E. Never

30. Name 3 songs that help you learn best.

.....  
.....  
.....

31. From the listed skills, which ones have you learned from the songs? Please tick.

- A. Cooperation
- B. Trust
- C. Caring
- D. Openness
- E. Decision-making
- F. All of the above
- G. None
- H. Others (specify them) ....., .....

32. What did you learn from these songs?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Working alone**

33. How often do you work alone in your class?

- A. Every day of the week
- B. Once a week
- C. Once a month
- D. Once a session
- E. Never

34. From the listed skills, which ones have you learned from working alone? Please tick.

- A. Cooperation
- B. Trust
- C. Caring
- D. Openness
- E. Decision-making
- F. All of the above
- G. None
- H. Others (specify them) ....., .....

35. What did you learn from working alone?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Other issues**

36. Do you use your past experiences in your learning?

- YES
- NO

37. If yes, say how they helped you in your learning.

.....  
.....  
.....

38. Does your teacher deal with issues that interest you?

- ( ) YES
- ( ) NO

39. If yes, what interesting topics did you do?

.....  
.....  
.....

40. Can you say why they interested you?

.....  
.....  
.....

41. What new skills have you learned from these issues?

.....  
.....

42. What can be done to improve the way you are taught?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**General information**

43. Tick the appropriate for your age

- ( ) A. 12—14
- ( ) B. 15—17
- ( ) C. 18—20
- ( ) D. Above 20

44. Tick the appropriate

- ( ) A. Male
- ( ) B. Female

**Thank you very much for your time and contribution!**

**Teachers**

Investigating the learner-centred approach in language teaching in Lesotho

Please tick or write in full to answer the following questions.

1. Please indicate the subject language you teach:

- ( ) A. English
- ( ) B. Sesotho
- ( ) C. Both languages

2. In which classes do you teach the language?

- ( ) A. Form B—Sesotho
- ( ) B. Form B—English
- ( ) C. Form B—both Sesotho and English
- ( ) D. Form D—Sesotho
- ( ) E. Form D—English
- ( ) F. Form D—both Sesotho and English

**Teaching methods**

3. Which teaching approaches do you often use?

**For Sesotho:**

- ( ) A. Games
- ( ) B. Group work
- ( ) C. Working in pairs
- ( ) D. Working alone
- ( ) E. Drama
- ( ) F. Pictures/ drawing
- ( ) G. Puzzles
- ( ) H. Songs/ music

**For English:**

- ( ) A. games
- ( ) B. group work
- ( ) C. working in pairs
- ( ) D. working alone
- ( ) E. drama
- ( ) F. pictures/ drawing
- ( ) G. puzzles
- ( ) H. songs/ music

4. Mention other teaching methods you use that are not included in 2.

.....  
.....  
.....

5. Of the teaching methods you use, which 4 do you consider the best approaches?

.....  
.....  
.....

6. Why do you think they are the best?

.....  
.....

7. Which methods help students learn best?

.....  
.....  
.....

8. How do they help students learn?

.....  
.....  
.....

9. How can you best define learner-centred teaching methods?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Using games in learning**

10. How often do you use games in your class?

- ( ) A. Every day of the week
- ( ) B. Once a week
- ( ) C. Once a month
- ( ) D. Once a session
- ( ) E. Never

11. Name 3 games that you use in:

**Sesotho:** .....,.....,.....  
**English:**.....,.....,.....

12. Which games do the students enjoy most?

.....  
.....

13. Which games promote the best learning?

.....  
.....  
.....

14. Why do you think they promote learning?

.....  
.....  
.....

15. From the listed skills, which ones do you emphasise/ teach from these games? Please tick.

- ( ) A. Cooperation
- ( ) B. Trust
- ( ) C. Caring
- ( ) D. Openness
- ( ) E. Decision-making
- ( ) F. All of the above
- ( ) G. None
- ( ) H. Others (specify them) .....,.....

16. What additional skills do you think learners get from playing the games?

.....  
.....  
.....

17. What do students learn from these games?

.....  
.....  
.....

18. Does this strategy help you to achieve syllabus coverage?

- YES
- NO

19. If yes, can you give an example of how the strategy helps you to achieve the syllabus coverage?

.....  
.....  
.....

### **Group work**

20. How often do you use group work in your class?

- A. Every day of the week
- B. Once a week
- C. Once a month
- D. Once a session
- E. Never

21. How do you conduct group work sessions?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

22. Do you manage to control learners in the group activity?

- YES
- NO

23. If no, can you explain why it is impossible sometimes?

.....  
.....  
.....

24. How do you ensure that the assigned work is completed?

.....  
.....  
.....

25. From the listed skills, which ones do you emphasise/ teach using group work? Please tick.

- A. Cooperation
- B. Trust
- C. Caring
- D. Openness
- E. Decision-making
- F. All of the above

- G. None
- H. Others (specify them) ....., .....

26. What additional skills do you think learners get from working in groups?

.....  
.....  
.....

27. Does this strategy help you to achieve syllabus coverage?

- YES
- NO

28. If yes, can you give an example of how the strategy helps you to achieve the syllabus coverage?

.....  
.....

**Drama / role-play**

29. How often do you use drama/ role-play in your teaching?

- A. Every day of the week
- B. Once a week
- C. Once a month
- D. Once a session
- E. Never

30. Which dramas/ role-plays do the students enjoy most?

.....  
.....  
.....

31 Do you manage to control learners in this activity?

- YES
- NO

32. If no, can you explain why it is impossible sometimes?

.....  
.....  
.....

33. From the listed skills, which ones do you emphasise/ teach from the drama/ role-play? Please tick.

- A. Cooperation
- B. Trust
- C. Caring
- D. Openness
- E. Decision-making
- F. All of the above
- G. None
- H. Others (specify them) ....., .....

34. What additional skills do you think learners get from playing these dramas/

role-plays?

.....  
.....  
.....

35. What do students learn from these drama/ role-play?

.....  
.....  
.....

36. Does this strategy help you to achieve syllabus coverage?

- YES
- NO

37. If yes, can you give an example of how the strategy helps you to achieve the syllabus coverage?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Pictures/ drawing**

38. How often do you use pictures/ drawings in your teaching?

- A. Every day of the week
- B. Once a week
- C. Once a month
- D. Once a session
- E. Never

39. Which pictures/ drawings do the students enjoy most?

.....  
.....  
.....

40. Do you manage to control learners in this activity?

- YES
- NO

41. If no, can you explain why it is impossible sometimes?

.....  
.....  
.....

42. From the listed skills, which ones do you emphasise/ teach from these pictures? Please tick.

- A. Cooperation
- B. Trust
- C. Caring
- D. Openness
- E. Decision-making
- F. All of the above
- G. None

[ ] H. Others (specify them) .....

43. What additional skills do you think learners get from using the pictures/ drawings?

.....  
.....  
.....

44. What do students learn from these pictures/ drawings?

.....  
.....  
.....

45. Does this strategy help you to achieve syllabus coverage?

- [ ] YES
- [ ] NO

46. If yes, can you give an example of how the strategy helps you to achieve the syllabus coverage?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Songs/ music**

47. How often do you use songs/music in your teaching?

- [ ] A. Every day of the week
- [ ] B. Once a week
- [ ] C. Once a month
- [ ] D. Once a session
- [ ] E. Never

48. Which songs/music do the students enjoy most?

.....  
.....  
.....

49. Do you manage to control learners in this activity?

- [ ] YES
- [ ] NO

50. If no, can you explain why it is impossible sometimes?

.....  
.....  
.....

51. From the listed skills, which ones do you emphasise/ teach from the songs/ music? Please tick

- [ ] A. Cooperation
- [ ] B. Trust
- [ ] C. Caring
- [ ] D. Openness
- [ ] E. Decision-making
- [ ] F. All of the above

- G. None
- H. Others (specify them) .....

52. What additional skills do you think learners get from using the songs/ music?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

53. What do students learn from the songs/ music?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

54. Does this strategy help you to achieve syllabus coverage?

- YES
- NO

55. If yes, can you give an example of how the strategy helps you to achieve the syllabus coverage?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

**Working alone**

56. How often do you let students work alone in your teaching?

- A. Every day of the week
- B. Once a week
- C. Once a month
- D. Once a session
- E. Never

57. Do you manage to control learners in this activity?

- YES
- NO

58. If no, can you explain why it is impossible sometimes?

.....  
 .....

59. From the listed skills, which ones do you emphasise/ teach from working alone? Please tick.

- A. Cooperation
- B. Trust
- C. Caring
- D. Openness
- E. Decision-making
- F. All of the above
- G. None
- H. Others (specify them) .....,.....

60. What additional skills do you think learners get from working alone?

.....  
.....  
.....

61. What do students learn from working alone?

.....  
.....  
.....

62. Does this strategy help you to achieve syllabus coverage?

- YES
- NO

63. If yes, can you give an example of how the strategy helps you to achieve the syllabus coverage?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Other issues**

64. Do the learners' experiences assist in their learning?

- YES
- NO

65. If yes, say how they helped students in their learning.

.....  
.....  
.....

66. Of the following issues, which ones do you address in your teaching?

- A. Gender
- B. Abuse
- C. Environment
- D. Life skills

Others (specify)....., .....,.....

67. What skills do learners acquire in the use of the teaching methods you consider learner-centred?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

68. Does this strategy help you to achieve syllabus coverage?

- YES
- NO

69. If yes, can you give an example of how the strategy helps you to achieve the syllabus coverage?

.....

.....  
.....

70. How can you rank your students as you use the learner-centred teaching approaches?

- A. Dependent on the teacher
- B. Dependent on group members
- C. Independent
- D. Looking for information a lot
- E. Not sure

71. What improvements would you suggest in the teaching of languages?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**General information**

72. For how many years have you been teaching the subject?

- A. Less than 5 years
- B. 5—10 years
- C. 11—15 years
- D. More than 15 years

73. Which qualification do you hold?

- A. STC
- B. BEd
- C. BA+CCE
- D. BA ED
- E. MEd
- F. MA
- Other  
(specify).....,.....,.....

74. Please tick your age

- A. 20—30
- B. 31—40
- C. 41—50
- D. Above 50

**Thank you very much for your time and contribution!!**

## Appendix F: Focused discussion

### Some questions...

1. What learner-centred teaching methods are being employed in the teaching of Sesotho and English?

What are the common teaching strategies used?

Frequency –how often are these strategies used?

At least how many strategies per lesson, per objective?

Are these methods possible / effective in learning/ teaching process?

How do the teacher and learners use the questions as a strategy?

Are these questions of various types- how, why, demonstrate, explain?

Out of the common strategies- games, songs/ music, group work, working alone, drama/ role-play, puzzles, pictures/drawings-which ones are commonly used in your school?

2. What benefits do teachers see in the learner-centred approach?

(a) Does the child-centred approach promote learning? What evidence do teachers and learners have?

(b) Does it enhance skills? Which are the skills? What evidence do teachers and learners have?

Life skills – how are they addressed? Which ones are emphasised? Why the emphasis?

(c) To what extent does it promote syllabus coverage? What evidence do teachers and learners have?

How does using the learner-centred approach assist in syllabus coverage? If there is no syllabus coverage, what might be the reasons?

3 If teachers consider that there are benefits in using the learner-centred

approach, what can be done at different levels (the education system, school and classroom) to encourage more teachers to use them and improve them?

What improvements can be made in order to encourage more teachers to use the learner-centred approach?

How does the learner-centred approach promote learning?

When using this approach explain how students perceive their learning.

4. What other learner-centred methods can teachers and learners recommend?

Other learner centred approaches not discussed